

# The Theatre of War

*An analysis of Norwegian media's Afghanistan coverage  
and the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces*

**Peder Ottosen**



Master thesis – Peace and Conflict Studies  
Department of Political Science

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO  
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# Abstract

This thesis analyses Norwegian media's coverage of the war in Afghanistan in light of the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces. The thesis focuses on the coverage produced while the journalists have visited the Norwegian military in Afghanistan, either through "media visits" or "embedding". The analysis include both articles from Norwegian newspapers and the documentary "Norge i krig – Oppdrag Afghanistan". In order to provide a thorough analysis of the coverage and the communication tools employed by the Norwegian Armed Forces, the study consists of both a quantitative and qualitative content analysis, in addition to semi-structured interviews. The empirical dataset shows that although the journalists leave behind several of the ethical norms of journalism, the coverage reflects only some of the communication goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces. The thesis argues that this can partially be explained by a lack of sophistication and precision in the communication conducted by the Norwegian Armed Forces. Moreover, the findings have consequences for the theories of media-state relations developed by Maxwell McCombs (2004) and W. Lance Bennett (1990). Based on the empirical data, it is argued that both the ethical norms of journalism *and* the sophistication of the communication made by the source should be addressed when explaining what factors influence the media agenda. This will arguably provide a more applicable theoretical framework for understanding the complexities of media-state relations.



# Preface

I am a practicing journalist, and I have always been fascinated by individuals who travel to the frontline to report on the realities of war. They are hailed as mystic heroes by the readers and put themselves in great danger to provide crucial information for the public at home. But at one point I started asking myself: To what extent do the media report independently and critically? Are there other influential actors trying to “direct the theatre of war”? This triggered other intriguing questions: What is the role of the military itself in all of this? And to what extent are they able to communicate their intended message through the media? This curiosity inspired me to start working on a thesis on the relationship between the media and the Norwegian Armed Forces, and it is my hope that the research will provide some new insight into the realities of communication and media in times of war.

In the university program Peace and Conflict, we are encouraged to write within our own academic discipline. For me as a journalist, this has resulted in a thesis within the field of media and communication. However, to increase the inter-disciplinary relevance of this thesis, and make use of the multidisciplinary nature of the program, I have written a thesis that also draws upon social science-theories addressing media-state relations.

I have a full time job in the Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet. However, it is important to stress that I have not worked closely as a journalist with Norway’s engagement in Afghanistan. I have great respect for the reporters who report from the frontline. Because I have never covered an armed conflict, I am humble when embarking on the task of analysing media’s coverage from Afghanistan. Also, I find it necessary to emphasise that potential criticism is directed more towards the editors in charge, than the individual journalists.

There are many people that have contributed to this thesis. To them, I am forever grateful. First, I would like to thank my supervisor Henrik Thune for his good advice, patience and commitment to my research. It has been a

pleasure working with you. Second, I want to thank my mother for her care and encouragements during both the ups and downs of writing this thesis. I am equally grateful to my father for his highly valuable scholarly as well as fatherly, advice. I also owe great gratitude to the Norwegian Armed Forces, and Petter Hallvard Foght Lindqvist in particular, for their availability and facilitation. Moreover, I would like to thank the journalists I have interviewed for their will to participate. Finally, I want to thank all of my fellow PECOS-students at Blindern for making these two and a half years memorable and highly valued.

This being said, the responsibility of the 33.000 words in this thesis is mine and mine alone. All translations from Norwegian to English are made by the author.

Peder Ottosen

Oslo, November 10. 2011



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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Information and communication in modern warfare

Following the multiple terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, the battle for the so-called hearts and minds of the people has been attributed an increasingly important role in the “theatre” of war. Phillip M. Taylor argues that, today “it is essential for the eventual victor to win the moral high ground in the public domain on a global scale – and not just in the short term. In other words, they also need to win the ‘propaganda war’” (Taylor 2002:16). Relevant for the application of theories on communication and warfare, it is not only scholars who emphasise the importance of winning the battle for hearts and minds. Governments and military organisations have recognized this as well. In the “Information Operations Roadmap Charter”, published in 2003 by Donald H. Rumsfeld and the American Department of Defence, it is stated that information is now “critical to military success and will only become more so in the foreseeable future” (American Department of Defence 2003:3). The role of information has also been emphasised with regards to the war in Afghanistan. In the “Initial Assessment” (2009), the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), General McChrystal, analyse the challenges ISAF face in Afghanistan, and what measures needs to be taken. One of the issues he addresses is the role of the information domain as a battle space: “[I]t is one in which ISAF must take aggressive actions to win the important battle of perception” (McChrystal 2009:40). Interestingly, it was General McChrystal’s critical statements to the media regarding President Barack Obama and his administration that finally cost him his job as ISAF-commander (NBC June 23, 2010).

It is evident that information and perception-management has become a vital aspect of any war, and as a consequence the Norwegian Armed Forces have developed a specific communication strategy for Afghanistan in 2011. An important aim in the communication strategy is to rally support and

understanding for the “role and tasks” of the Norwegian Armed Forces (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011).<sup>1</sup> In June 2010, a road bomb killed four Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan, a tragedy that once again fuelled the public debate regarding Norway’s engagement in Afghanistan. One way for the Norwegian Armed Forces to obtain domestic public support and understanding is through media’s coverage (Schiager 2011:92-93), and they apply several tools in order to do this. Chief of communication at the Norwegian Joint Headquarters of the Norwegian Armed Forces, Petter Hallvard Foght Lindqvist, explains that among the tools employed are arrangements that allow the media to visit and meet Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan, two of the most important being “media visits” and so-called “embedding”.<sup>2</sup> The term “media visits” is here understood as trips where journalists are invited to, or request to visit, Norwegian Armed Forces’ bases in Afghanistan. A more extensive version of these media visits is “embedding”. Lindqvist explains that through embedding, journalists join a military unit on their operative missions in the “theatre”.

## **1.2 Research questions**

Due to the significance attributed to the relationship between information, media and warfare described above, the topic constitutes an important area of research within the discipline of Peace and Conflict. There exists a vast amount of research literature on media content and media effects on both the public and on governmental policies in times of war and crises. Yet, less attention has been directed to what factors influence the media coverage in general (McCombs 2004:118), and, more specifically, how the military and governmental officials relates to, and affects, the “media agenda” in times of war (Borchgrevink 2010:10; Gervin 2004:9). Some research has been conducted on how embedding affects the domestic war coverage in countries

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<sup>1</sup> I have obtained a copy of the communication strategy, and permitted to use it freely. However, because it is not an official document, it will not be attached in the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Telephone-interview with Petter Hallvard Foght Lindqvist (June 7. June 12. and July 22. 2011). All later citations of Lindqvist derive from these interviews.

like the U.S. and the Netherlands. In Norway, research has analysed the nature of the Norwegian Afghanistan coverage in general, one example being Kristin Nordby (2009), and how the relationship between the Norwegian Armed Forces and Norwegian journalists affects the presentation of the Norwegian Armed Forces in the media (Schiager 2011). In addition, Eivind Solberg-Hansen Fondenes has provided a comparative analysis of Norwegian media's coverage of military and civilian victims (2011).

However, there exists no literature that analyses the coverage conducted solely by journalists embedded with the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan, or by journalists on media visits to the Norwegian military bases. Moreover, Norwegian media's Afghanistan coverage has not been analysed in light of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy. This thesis sets out to narrow this knowledge gap, and seeks to answer three research questions.

First, the thesis aims to answer two empirical questions:

*What characterises the Norwegian media coverage produced on “media visits” or while “embedded” in Afghanistan?*

*To what extent does the media coverage fulfil the expressed goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy?*

Building from these questions, the thesis will then seek to answer the following analytical question:

*What do the empirical findings say about the media-state relation, and what are the theoretical implications for the academic debate?*

These are important questions because the communication strategy, as well as the subsequent media coverage, play a central role in the Norwegian Armed

Forces' battle for the "hearts and minds" of the public at home and abroad. Afghanistan has been chosen as a case because it is Norway's single most extensive military operation today. At the beginning of 2011, 528 soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan (Norwegian Department of Defence 2011:34). Moreover, it is an operation that has been given massive media attention over the last ten years, and is often described as Norway's most important military effort post World War II (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011).

The analysis will allow for a discussion on what role such tools as media visits and embedding play in fulfilling the goals of the strategy, and how successful the Norwegian Armed Forces are in communicating their messages. The analysis also carries significance as it can help to increase our understanding of the journalistic process when covering war. Journalists are intended to serve as critical "watchdogs" that inform the public and create debate, and are thus one of the most important institutions in a democratic society (Norsk Presseforbund 2005). Analysing the characteristics of the coverage will provide a possible basis for discussing how journalists carry out this role. When including the perspectives of both the military and the media, it is the aim of this thesis also to discuss the potential theoretical implications for the relationship between the two.

### **1.3 Answering the research questions**

In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative content analysis will be conducted. It will analyse Norwegian newspapers' coverage of Afghanistan in the last six months of 2010 and the first six months of 2011, focusing on the coverage that has been produced while the journalists have been either embedded or on media visits. The first research question will be analysed through an empirical study of relevant characteristics of the coverage and to what extent those characteristics are in line with the ethical norms of journalism. With regards to the second research question, the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces for Afghanistan 2011 will be



employed as a comparative element. The thesis identifies four specific goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy:

1. Communicate the cooperation and mentoring of Afghan security forces.
2. Communicate the importance of a broad international effort.
3. Promote and explain the Norwegian Armed Forces' tasks and competence.
4. Downplay combat actions.

These goals will be operationalized into four variables that seek to identify to what extent the four goals are fulfilled through the coverage.

In order to sophisticate the analysis, the quantitative analysis will be supplemented with a qualitative content analysis of the documentary "Norge i krig – Oppdrag Afghanistan", as well as semi-structured interviews with both journalists and a representative of the Norwegian Armed Forces.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that the media at times supplement the coverage produced on media visits or while embedded, with news items produced in Norway or elsewhere. However, as it is the goal of this thesis to increase our knowledge of the role of media visits and embedding exclusively, such news items will not be included in the analysis.

With regards to the third research question, the empirical findings will be applied in a broader generic and theoretical discussion. The theoretical framework of this thesis is based upon Maxwell McCombs' (2004) seminal theory of media agenda-setting. To help increase our understanding of the process of agenda-setting and media-state relations, the ethical norms of Norwegian journalism (Norsk Presseforbund 2005) and Lance Bennett's theory of indexing (1990) will be incorporated into this theoretical framework.

The aim of the thesis is not to prove causality, as implied by McCombs' theory. There are too many extraneous variables that could influence the causal

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to the semi-structured interviews, the thesis will draw upon data from a survey conducted by Respons Analyse (2011). The survey is based upon structured interviews with 500 employees in the Norwegian Armed Forces, as well as 500 journalists, regarding the relationship between journalists and the Norwegian Armed Forces.

link between a dependent and independent variable, thus jeopardizing the validity of the research (Bryman 2008:156). Moreover, with regards to media content, it is problematic to claim that there is one single variable causing the coverage. A reporter is influenced by many factors, such as personal beliefs and biases, editors and audience, and the environment in which he reports from (Groseclose and Milyo 2005; Engen, 2006). Thus, it can be argued that it would be counter-productive to claim a clear causal link between the Norwegian Armed Forces and the media coverage.

Regardless of the discrepancy between the theory and the methodological approach employed in the thesis with regards to causality, McCombs' theory of media agenda-setting provides a highly valuable tool in interpreting the results of the analysis. It includes all the relevant factors that will be studied in the thesis, and provides a framework for understanding how these factors relate to each other. Moreover, it will be interesting to discuss the empirical results of this study in light of the causality argued by McCombs' theory.<sup>4</sup>

The three research questions will be operationalised into three hypotheses. These hypotheses derive from the dominant theories of media-state relations applied in this study. In order to provide the necessary foundation for the hypotheses, they will be presented in chapter 3 after having thoroughly established the theoretical framework of the thesis.

## **1.4 Outline of thesis**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. *Chapter 2* provides a background context of the topic at hand. It describes the historical development of media and warfare in Norway, and the relationship between the media and the government.

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<sup>4</sup> The potential impact media-coverage can have on the public opinion, and the potential influence the public opinion exerts on the coverage, will not be analysed. This would require a very different research design and theoretical approach, including media effects and perception analysis. However, as an interesting backdrop to the thesis, recent research indicates that 94% of the Norwegian public receives knowledge about the Norwegian Armed Forces from the media (Synovate 2011:15).

*Chapter 3* places the study within a larger theoretical perspective. Additionally, it provides the theoretical framework of the thesis, and explains how Maxwell McCombs' theory of media agenda-setting will be applied to the study at hand.

In *Chapter 4*, the methodological approach of the thesis will be explained. The chapter describes how the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, in addition to the semi-structured interviews, will be employed in answering the research questions. It will also address the quality of the methodological approach, and some of the methodological challenges of the study.

*Chapter 5* will concisely present the findings of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

*Chapter 6* will provide a discussion of the results, and will also include the majority of the answers from the semi-structured interviews. This aims to provide a deeper and more profound understanding of the empirical data. Moreover, the chapter will discuss what the results say about the media-state relation, and the subsequent implications for the theoretical framework applied.

In *chapter 7*, the final conclusions and some recommendations to the media and the Norwegian Armed Forces will be presented. Potential opportunities for future research will also be described.

## 2.0 Historical background and concepts

### 2.1 Development of media and warfare in Norway

When Norway became an independent state in 1905, there was an expectation from the Norwegian government that the media would act loyal to Norway's relations to foreign powers (Nilsen and Sjøe 1998; Ottosen 2001:198-202). Moreover, by as late as 2001, the Norwegian government had a list of 200 journalists that would volunteer as information officers in the event of war (Ottosen 2001:198-202). These features indicate that close links have existed between the Norwegian government and journalists, and is further supported by Thune et. al. (2006). Based on their own and other's research, Thune et. al. argue that the media coverage of Norwegian foreign policy to a large extent communicate and emphasise the arguments and perceptions formulated by the politicians or practitioners of the official policies (Thune et. al. 2006:211). One of the explanations to this dependence is what has been labelled the "consensus-oriented foreign policy" in Norway, where the agreement among the political parties historically has determined Norwegian foreign policies. Moreover, it is argued that Norwegian media adhere to this consensus, resulting in a dependence on official sources (Thune et. al. 2006:211-212).

Other studies confirm the assumption of Norwegian media's loyalty to the government and the Norwegian Armed Forces also at times of war. An analysis of the coverage of the First Gulf War shows that media from NATO-countries such as Norway and Germany reflected more of the American rhetoric than Swedish and Finnish media. A similar difference was found during the conflict in Kosovo, where the Swedish press was more critical towards the war than the press in Norway and Britain (Ottosen 2001:218-219).

Furthermore, military organisations invest greater and greater resources in affecting the agenda set by the media, the reason being the increasingly important role of journalists and media in conflicts (Ottosen 2009:34). In this new media environment, where journalists have the capability of covering a

war 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the increasingly important “battle for hearts and minds”, NATO has recognized the need to modernise as well. Alistair Campbell, former press secretary for Labour in Great Britain, has emphasised that media operations were vital during the conflict in Kosovo: “In this changed media environment, in a modern conflict [...] effective communication is not merely a legitimate function; it is an essential one” (Campbell 1999:32 quoted in Gervin 2004:11). Yet, studying the Norwegian Armed Forces’ information activity during Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, Gervin (2004:95) found that the Norwegian Armed Forces had no explicit information strategy, and that there were significant differences between the Norwegian Armed Forces and the specific information strategy employed by NATO.

## **2.2 Situation today**

The discrepancy between the Norwegian Armed Forces and NATO with regards to information and strategies has now been reduced. Today, the Norwegian Armed Forces have a communication strategy specifically directed at their mission in Afghanistan. The strategy derives from NATO’s communication strategy and the political goals of the Norwegian government for Afghanistan. Looking at the statistics, it is no mystery why the Norwegian Armed Forces are concerned with what the media write about them. According to the Norwegian Armed Forces, an overage of 3-400 different media outlets write about the Norwegian Armed Forces every day (Schiager 2011:2). But this development can also be understood in light of the increased ability of the Taliban to perform strategic communication. Since 9/11 the Taliban’s communication capabilities have “dramatically” improved, and is today characterised by sophisticated technology and vast communication networks where information travels with great speed (Foxley 2008 quoted in Bøe Hansen 2009:52).

An increased consciousness towards the role of communication strategies is not the only thing that has changed. We have also seen the rise of

specific tools intended to fulfil these strategies. As stated in the introduction, the thesis will focus on two of the most extensive tools employed to fulfil the goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy, namely media visits and embedding. Yet another development is the Norwegian parliament's decision from 2001 to integrate the Chief of Defence and his staff with the Ministry of Defence, named Integrated Strategic Management (ISL). Consequently, the two information units of the Norwegian Armed Forces and the Ministry of defence have been united. Petter Lindqvist explains in the interview that this has posed challenges for an organisation that "aims to make a distinction between messaging from the military level and messaging from the political level, the latter communicating political messages".

### *2.2.1 Media visits*

Media visits can be understood as trips where journalists are invited to or requests to stay, in the Norwegian Armed Forces' bases in Afghanistan or other destinations where Norwegian troops are located. Lindqvist states that media visits to Norwegian bases abroad have been organised by the Norwegian Armed Forces for over ten years. The first time it was employed was during the war in Bosnia. On such visits journalists can live on the base, learn more about the soldiers' everyday-life, and interview the soldiers and their superiors. The thesis will also analyse media visits organised in relation to governmental ministers' trips to the bases. Media visits, arranged by either the Norwegian Armed Forces or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are the most common way for Norwegian journalists to travel to Afghanistan (Sømme Hammer 2010:58).

Anders Sømme Hammer has worked as a freelance-journalist in Afghanistan since 2007. Having been on several media visits with the Norwegian Armed Forces before deciding to work independently in Afghanistan, Sømme Hammer explains the mechanisms of media visits in his book *Drømmekrigen* (2010):

Press officers and public relations-agents have prepared everything for me. It has always been scheduled time for interviews. And ministers and soldiers have posed for the camera in surroundings that clearly show that we are in Afghanistan.

(Sømme Hammer 2010:59)

Statements in the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy for Afghanistan confirm most of Sømme Hammer's descriptions. On media visits, dedicated escort officers are appointed, all interviews must be approved by the Norwegian Armed Forces, and all personnel are briefed on media-awareness before deployment to Afghanistan (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011). In the interview conducted with Kristin Solberg, Aftenposten's correspondent in Afghanistan, she describes how the visits are organised:

It's a well functioning system. They arrange things for you. It is an advantage for the Norwegian Armed Forces that few journalists travel outside the camps. They arrive straight from Norway to the bases and are met by a smiling Norwegian who tells you about the positive military progress. When you don't leave the bases, you have no reason to question that progress.<sup>5</sup>

According to Solberg, media visits are popular arrangements within Norwegian media: "I once talked to a press officer who recently had arrived at the base. He was surprised by how many requests he had received from Norwegian journalists. This surprised me as well."

### *2.2.2 Embedding*

A more extensive version of the media visit is embedding. Through embedding, journalists are invited not only to stay in the camp, but also to join a military unit on their combat operations. A useful definition of embedded-journalism, a definition also applicable to the Norwegian context, is: "Any media journalist contractually registered [...] to travel with military units

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<sup>5</sup> Telephone-interview with Kristin Solberg, South-Asia correspondent for Aftenposten (September 9. 2011). All later citations of Solberg derive from this interview.

during combat operations for the purpose of reporting first-hand experiences to the media” (Villareal 2005:5). The U.S. Army first employed embedding during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, and it was one of the key features of their communication strategy (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies 2008:11; Tumber and Palmer 2004:2). During the Falklands war in 1982, the British government had failed to appreciate the importance of information in warfare. They kept the public ill-informed by suppressing bad news (Carruthers 2000:129), and they embedded reporters “more or less by accident” (Tumber and Palmer 2004:2). Having learnt a lesson from the British mistakes, the U.S. Army had an explicit communication strategy for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. The U.S. Department of Defence, through cooperation and dialogue with the media outlets, arranged for the journalists to be situated with the different troops (Tumber and Palmer 2004:2).

Despite the success of the program during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Norwegian Armed Forces state that it was not until 3-4 years ago that they employed embedding as a tool in their communication strategy. In the interviews conducted, both Petter Lindqvist and Rune Thomas Ege<sup>6</sup>, former press officer in Afghanistan and now a journalist for VG, state that embedding was introduced in the Norwegian Armed Forces in 2008. Sømme Hammer argues that Norwegian embedding did not commence until 2010.<sup>7</sup> The different views can possibly be a consequence of deviating interpretations of what embedding entails. Regardless, when compared to states like the U.S. and the Netherlands, the arrangement is less employed and less formalised in the Norwegian Armed Forces. Still, Lindqvist states in the interview that embedding is regarded by the organisation as a more effective tool in meeting the goals of the communication strategy, than a regular media visit. Sømme Hammer argues that the goal of the Norwegian Armed Forces when embedding journalists, is ”to communicate ‘the soldiers’ war’. It is intended to create

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Rune Thomas Ege, journalist in VG (August 29. 2011). All later citations of Ege derive from this interview.

<sup>7</sup> Telephone-interview with Anders Sømme Hammer, independent journalist (September 12. 2011). All later citations of Sømme Hammer derive from this interview if not stated otherwise



understanding for the soldiers' experience of war, and their perspectives". Ege has a similar perception, and states that both media visits and embedding is intended to show what the Norwegian Armed Forces do: "If the coverage is positive, it is a bonus, but they are mostly concerned with the precision of the coverage and that the facts presented are correct."

### *2.2.3 General features of visits*

Before embedding, or joining a media visit, the journalists must sign a contract where they among other things are not allowed to conduct off-record interviews and publish classified information such as information about future operations or troop strength, capabilities and equipment (ISAF 2011). However, Rune Thomas Ege has experienced that on media visits, the journalists are most often free to leave the bases and interview the locals. Lindqvist explains that during embedding, this is obviously not an option, because leaving the troops would constitute a threat for both the journalists and the soldiers. Sømme Hammer also states that leaving the camps during media visits does not provide the same opportunities to interview the civilians or other actors as reporting independently. While Ege and Lindqvist claim that there are relatively few constraints besides classified information, Sømme Hammer argues in the interview that even on media visits, the Norwegian Armed forces control the situation on the bases to a large extent.

All interviews must be cleared by the army, and often you would have to go through a press officer. There is absolutely no free access. [...] Thus, the army has control over where the journalists are at any given time, and they know what stories will be published. [...] Media visits become more like a theatre.

Kristin Solberg has the same perception as Sømme Hammer:

There are many limitations. By visiting the bases you only get the military perspective, and if you look at the understanding you develop of Afghans and Afghan society, you could almost just as well visit an army base back in Norway. Another limitation is that some of the soldiers are

off limits, and many of the other soldiers will not tell you the whole truth.

Einar Hagvaag, a reporter in *Dagbladet*, agrees that there are restrictions with regards to information that could threaten the security of the Norwegian Armed Forces, but that this is information “not relevant for publishing”. However, Hagvaag also states that: “What they have managed to keep a secret is exactly what the Norwegian special soldiers have done in Afghanistan.”<sup>8</sup>

Media visits and embedding can be understood as two examples of information subsidies. Sigurd Allern (1997:73) describes information-subsidies as “a generous offer of material, the sender usually offers it free of charge and expects nothing in return except the publicity achieved if the material is used”. Due to limitations in time and resources for the news-organisations, sources offer subsidies like financing trips, work-facilities, food and accommodation. These commodities are offered by the sources with the aim of communicating a certain message to the population (Schiager 2011:16). Oppositely, when information is hard to come by, journalists are reluctant to write about a topic (Schiager 2011:88). In the case of media visits to the Norwegian Armed Forces’ bases, Lindqvist explains that the media often pay for the transport to and from Afghanistan, but stay and eat free of charge at the camp. Rune Thomas Ege states that VG always pays for their own flights, even when they travel with the Norwegian Armed Forces, and that this fee includes food and accommodation. Marius Arnesen, a video-reporter for NRK who was embedded three times with the Norwegian Armed Forces in the production of the documentary “Norge i krig”, states the same: “NRK paid for transport, food and accommodation. It has to be like that.”<sup>9</sup> However, Sømme Hammer argues that this is not the general practice among journalists: “The Norwegian Armed Forces finance these trips if the media do not specifically requests otherwise.” Kristin Solberg has only been on one media visit, and that was after the four

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Einar Hagvaag, journalist in *Dagbladet* (September 14. 2011). All later citations of Hagvaag derive from this interview.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Marius Arnesen, video-journalist in NRK (September 12. 2011). All later citations of Arnesen derive from this interview.

Norwegian soldiers were killed in the summer of 2010. She informs that as far as she knows, the Norwegian Armed Forces paid for her food and accommodation the three or four days she spent there.

### **2.3 Openness in the Norwegian Armed Forces**

When the Norwegian Armed Forces invite journalists to their camps in Afghanistan, this should be understood in light of the expressed aim of the Norwegian Armed Forces to “open up” to journalists and the public. In 2009, statements made by the former chief of the Norwegian Armed Forces, Sverre Diesen, encouraged increased openness in the organisation (Borchgrevink 2010:7). One year later, the new chief of the Norwegian Armed Forces, Harald Sunde, communicated the need for a more open media-policy (Sunde quoted in *Aftenposten* January 19. 2010).

The openness of the Norwegian Armed Forces towards the public and the media, or the lack of such openness, has been a widely debated topic (Sømme Hammer 2010; *Klassekampen* September 1. 2010; Hansen in *Dagbladet* June 14. 2011). In an interview with the Norwegian newspaper *Klassekampen*, journalists Fredrik Græsvik and Anders Sømme Hammer argue that the intention of increased openness towards the media is a result of the need to legitimise their mission in Afghanistan (quoted in *Klassekampen* September 1. 2010). Marius Arnesen, the video-journalist in NRK, explains that he was surprised to see how open the army was: “They just wanted to show the people back home what was actually happening on the ground. But you can always question how well they succeed with being more open.”

In line with this expressed scepticism, several commentators have claimed that in reality, the Norwegian Armed Forces have not changed noteworthy, and that only carefully selected information is communicated to the media and public. In an open letter published in *Dagbladet*, union representative Thomas Norman Hansen claims that soldiers who express discontent receive harsh criticism from their superiors afterwards (Hansen in *Dagbladet* June 14. 2011). Interviews conducted with 500 Norwegian officers

in 2011 also indicate that there are limitations to the openness in the Norwegian Armed Forces. On the question “how should the military leadership relate to the media during warfare?”, only 8 per cent of the respondents answered that “media should be allowed to work without constraints”, whereas 83 per cent answered that they should be offered to join the troops given that agreements had been made (Respons Analyse 2011). Furthermore, in Harald Bonaventura Borchgrevink’s analysis of the discrepancy between the media’s wish for openness and the Norwegian Armed Forces’ need for secrecy regarding the international operations in Afghanistan, he found that the Norwegian Armed Forces facilitates information that portrays the organisation in a positive light, while the secrecy regarding special operations leads to a suspicious attitude towards the organisation (Borchgrevink 2010:127).

The stated goal of the Norwegian Armed Forces to open up to the public, and the subsequent debate regarding their “actual” openness, constitutes an important backdrop when studying the relationship between the communication strategy and the media coverage.

## 3.0 Theoretical framework

Analytical approaches based on content analysis have on occasion been criticised for being non-theoretical. The critics argue that the focus is directed at what is being measured, rather than the theoretical significance of the findings (Bryman 2008:291). There is no secret that the empirical data itself constitutes the core of any content analysis, and this applies to the thesis at hand as well. However, as Bryman argues, the method does not need to be non-theoretical if the data is placed in a context of relevant ideas and concepts such as power. To avoid the pitfalls of downplaying the importance of theory, and to broaden the analytical scope of the empirical study, the thesis will analyse the results in light of McCombs' theory of media agenda-setting (2004), Lance Bennett's so-called indexing-hypothesis, the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces (2011), and the ethical framework of the Norwegian media (Norsk Presseforbund 2005). Before arriving at the theoretical foundation of this thesis, the next section will provide a brief literature review of the development of relevant theories addressing media, governments and power. This will help to conceptualize the theoretical approach of the thesis, and provide insight into the different theories developed within this area of research.

### 3.1 Media, governments and power<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the technological advances of the news media and their ability to cover war and conflict in real time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, scholars in the late 60's began to explore the relationship between the media, governmental policies and foreign-policy decision-making. Two scholarly camps emerged, one arguing that the media have the potential to shape foreign policy and the subsequent decision-making. This is most commonly referred to

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<sup>10</sup> This section draws upon research conducted by the author in an unpublished literature review at Dublin University College (Ottosen 2010)

as the “CNN-effect”, a term invented after the First Gulf War in 1991. Scholars such as Bernhard C. Cohen (1994), David Culbert (1998), Robert M. Entman (2000), Piers Robinson (2002) and Stuart N. Soroka (2003) have argued for such an effect. Many, and often contradictory, understandings of what the effect actually entails are found (Gilboa 2005 in Thune 2009:39). However, it can be argued that Steven Livingston provides a definition that encompasses many of the different aspects of the concept. He defines the CNN-effect as: (1) a policy agenda-setting agent, (2) an impediment to the achievement of desired policy goals and (3) an accelerant to policy decision-making (Livingston 1997:3).

Despite the vast research-material that supports the effect, the notion of media’s influence on governmental policies and decision-making has been highly contested. The opposing scholarly camp argues that the media have no such influence as held by the CNN-effect, but merely reflects and refers the attitudes expressed by governmental officials. In a theoretical perspective, this can be categorised as a part of the more wide-reaching “Propaganda-model” developed by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in 1988 (Herman and Chomsky 2002). The model is based on five “filters” that control or influence the media: (1) size and ownership of the media corporation, (2) advertising, (3) reliance on government, elites and experts, (4) “flak” or disciplining reactions from the public, and (5) “anticommunism” as a national religion and control mechanism (Herman and Chomsky 2002:2). They emphasise that it is mainly the third and fourth filter that is applicable also outside the American context. Herman and Chomsky argue that when media cover its own nation, or its allies, it can be expected that certain perspectives will be accepted without criticism. These perspectives include the honesty of governmental leaders and their concern with peace and democracy (Herman and Chomsky 2002:34).

Elements of Herman and Chomsky’s model, and especially the power of government and elites, have been supported by additional research conducted by other scholars, one seminal study being Lance Bennett’s from the 1980’s. Analysing the war in Nicaragua and the coverage in New York Times, he

tested the hypothesis that news is “indexed” in a manner that fits the governmental debate (Bennett 1990:103). Bennett found that news articles and editorials to a high degree reflected the opinions of governmental officials (Bennett 1990:116). In support of the notion of the media coverage as a reflection of governmental policies and expressed attitudes, is also Daniel Hallin’s seminal study *The Media, the War in Vietnam and Political Support; A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media*. His research concludes that the media did not, as many have claimed, cause a change in attitudes towards the war in Vietnam. The media only reflected the collapse of public and especially elite consensus (Hallin 1984:20). Studying the case of Somalia and the decision-making process leading up to the intervention in 1992, Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus provide further empirical results in support of Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda-model and Bennett’s theory of indexing. Livingston and Eachus conclude that “we find significant levels of news media attention *following* official decisions regarding U.S. policy toward Somalia” (1995:418).

Despite the presence of several hard-line scholars in this debate, some researchers also point to a two-way causal relationship between the media coverage and governmental policies, one example being Yaeli Bloch and Sam Lehman-Wilzig (2002). Another intermediate position is taken by Henrik Thune (2009). Using Norway as a case, he found that in the eyes of leading scholars and journalist, the influence of the media on the field of foreign policy is “modest”. The political actors, however, perceive the media institutions to have an important political influence (Thune 2009:187). Thune argues that the reason for the discrepancy in perception is that while scholars and journalists “understands the potential effect in terms of a traditional causal concept of influence and power”, the policy makers understand media as a “communicative arena” where the media can define the “reality confronting foreign politicians” (Thune 2009:186-187).

Having provided a brief introduction to the scholarly debate, it is not a bold statement to claim that numerous, and also conflicting, theories could

have been applied to this thesis. However, it can be argued that neither of these theories is suitable on their own, because they do not cover all the factors that will be scrutinised in the following sections; governmental and military sources, communication strategies, journalistic norms, and the characteristics of the news coverage. Rather, they are more general theories on the power of the media in the conduct of foreign policies. The thesis will still draw upon the influential work by Lance Bennett and Herman and Chomsky, but is in need of a more specific theoretical model.

### **3.2 The “onion” of media agenda-setting**

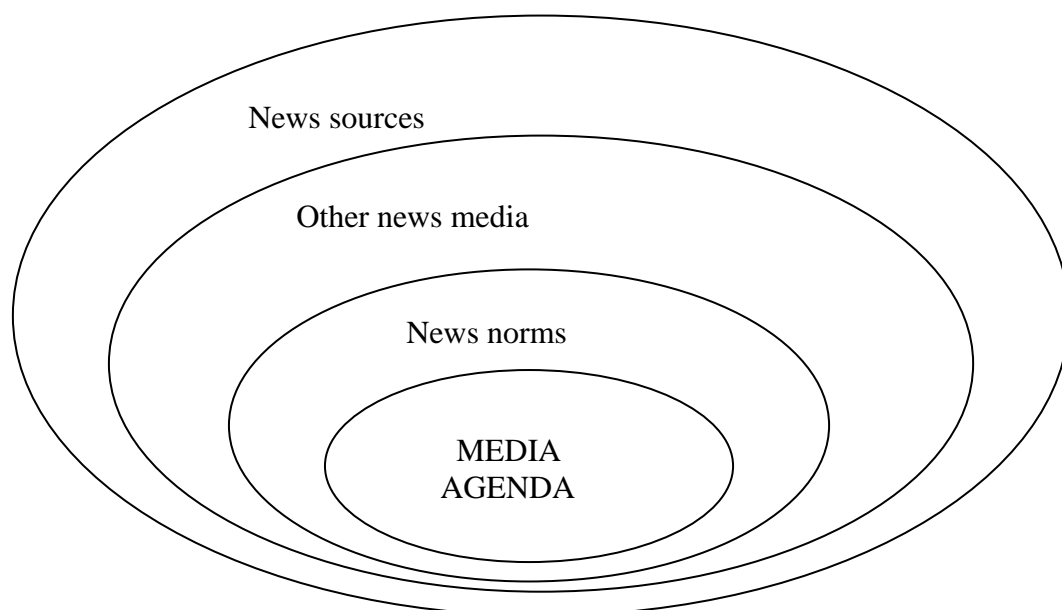
One such theory that does encompass most of the factors at hand is Maxwell McCombs’ (2004) theory of media agenda-setting, visualised by a model called “the metaphorical ‘onion’ of media agenda-setting” (model 3.1). The model is derived from the agenda-setting theory first presented by McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1968 (McCombs and Shaw 1972). McCombs’ model of media agenda-setting arguably serves as an intermediate position between the hardliners within the field. It recognises both the influence news sources can exert on the media agenda, but also how the journalists can filter the communication of the news sources. Finally, it recognises the importance of that media agenda, both for the source and for the public. Thus, the model fits with the approach of the study, and will henceforth be applied as the theoretical foundation of the thesis.

One of the main focal points of the original theory of agenda-setting is how the agenda set by the media also sets the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues (McCombs and Shaw 1972). McCombs and Shaw studied how the media covered political campaigns, and found that the main effect of the news media was to set an agenda through the presentation of a “media reality” or “media agenda”. In other terms, the media don’t tell people what to think, but what to think about (McCombs and Shaw 1972:176). Perception-analysis and media’s impact on public attitudes will not be studied in this thesis. But the importance of the media agenda argued by the theory



shows the imperative role of the media, and moreover why the topic of this thesis hopefully will provide important knowledge for scholars, the Norwegian Armed Forces, journalists and the public.

More important to the question at hand, scholars have used the agenda-setting theory as a basis to take one step backwards in the process, studying the initial factors that shapes the media agenda (McCombs 2004:98). The results of this research have produced the theoretical model that will be employed here. To explain the factors that influence the media agenda, McCombs use the metaphor of “peeling an onion”, with the media agenda situated at the core (model 3.1) (McCombs 2004:100). The layers of the onion constitute different influential factors with their potential impact increasing the closer to the core they are situated. The outmost layer of the onion, namely the “news sources”, represents the key external news sources exemplified by the president, public relations activities and political campaigns. Deeper inside the onion we find the interactions and influence of “other news media”, a phenomenon referred to as “intermedia agenda-setting” (McCombs 2004:100). Finally, the “news norms” and traditions of the media constitute the layer immediately surrounding the core of the onion, namely the “media agenda”:



**Model 3.1 McCombs' “onion” of media agenda-setting**

The “news sources” are at the outskirts of the onion. According to the model they have less impact on the media agenda than the news norms, but are still considered influential. Scholars have studied the relationship between the news sources and the media agenda. They have found that political campaigns do succeed in shaping the media agenda, but that the success depends on cultural differences, namely the norms and traditions of journalism (Hillsdale and Erlbaum 1991 quoted in McCombs 2004). Also, the public’s knowledge on government, business and state issues, both internationally and locally, “originates with public information officers and other public relations practitioners who represent important news sources” (McCombs 2004:102). This is confirmed by findings that show how press releases and other information subsidies play a “key role” in the “daily construction of all media agendas” (McCombs 2004:103). In line with this notion is arguably one of Herman and Chomsky’s five filters, namely the “reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power” (2002:2). As already argued, media visits and embedding constitute two examples of such information subsidies.

The effects of powerful news sources, such as governmental elites, are further supported by Hallin (1984), Bennett (1990) and Livingston and Eachus (1995). Furthermore, professor in communication Dennis McQuail states that the media is a tool of the government, and that the government represents the central actor with influence on both the media and the public (McQuail 1994 quoted in Gervin 2004:13). Looking at the most prominent sources in the coverage of “the war on terror”, Elisabeth Eide argues that the strong focus on conflict “excludes or marginalises peaceful strategies and the persons who support these strategies” (Eide 2004:267).

The role of “other news media”, represented by the layer inside the news sources, will not be taken into account in this thesis. The reason is that the research questions address the relationship between the Norwegian Armed Forces and the media, not the intermedia agenda-setting as this factor refers to.

Moreover, in the setting of media visits and embedding, the journalists will very seldom quote each other and draw upon other journalist's work. When newspapers or TV-stations prioritise to send a journalist to Afghanistan, they seek to find and present their own stories. In addition, McCombs explains that with regards to intermedia agenda-setting, it is the elite media that influence the agenda of other news media (McCombs 2004:113). In the setting of Afghanistan, it is almost exclusively elite media that visit the Norwegian troops. This is also confirmed by Petter Lindqvist in the interview conducted with him. When local newspapers on occasion do travel to Afghanistan, it is mostly to cover stories relevant to their local community at home. Thus, the elite media will not usually influence other media in that setting.

The layer closest to the core, the "news norms", according to the theory, has the strongest influence on the media agenda, and "define the ground rules for the ultimate shaping of the media agenda" (McCombs 2004:99). The news norms, as explained by McCombs, serve as "very powerful filters between the news sources and the media agenda, and guide the journalists' selection and interpretation of the information given" (McCombs 2004:117). There is "substantial evidence" supporting the argument that such norms can shape the media agenda (McCombs 2004:107), but the norms also are subject to "cultural differences" which affects the strength of the filter (McCombs 2004:105). McCombs use news norms as a term to describe both the newsworthiness ascribed to an issue by the journalists, and the more general "intervening influence" the media exert on the media agenda communicated.

According to the model, the news sources and the journalistic norms will contribute to shape the "media agenda", which is situated at the core of the onion. The media agenda can be described as the set of issues addressed by the newspapers, television and radio.

### *3.2.1 News sources: The Norwegian Armed Forces*

The Norwegian Armed Forces will represent the layer of news sources, and their communication strategy for Afghanistan in 2011 (Norwegian Armed

Forces 2011) will serve as a comparative element when analysing the media agenda. Because the goals of the strategy constitute the most accurate measure of what the Norwegian Armed Forces as a news source seeks to communicate to the public at home and abroad, it will be useful to incorporate the strategy in the theoretical “onion” developed by McCombs. A potential critique of employing this strategy is that it does not necessarily include the “hidden” objectives that the Norwegian Armed Forces might want to keep out of their stated strategy. However, the strategy itself is not actively communicated to the public by the Norwegian Armed Forces, indicating that it is not intended to serve as propaganda. The Norwegian Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs will also represent the news source when media visits are arranged in relation to their visits to the Norwegian military bases in Afghanistan.

According to James E. Grunig (1976 quoted in Schiager 2011) there are two types of communication strategies: the symmetrical and asymmetrical. In a symmetrical strategy, both the source and the recipient benefit equally from the relationship. In an asymmetrical strategy however, the source benefits on the effect on expense of the recipient, seeking to influence behaviour (Grunig 1976 quoted in Schiager 2011:15). In his research on how the relationship between journalists and the Norwegian Armed Forces colour the general presentation of the Norwegian Armed Forces in the media, Espen Schiager found that the Norwegian Armed Forces employ a two way asymmetric model. This means that the communication goes both ways, but that the only party benefiting from the communication is the Norwegian Armed Forces (Ihlen and Robstad 2004:58-59). As we recall, Borchgrevink also found that the Norwegian Armed Forces only communicate information that portrays them in a positive light (Borchgrevink 2010:127). Schiager argues that the Norwegian Armed Forces communicate to seek influence. They use the media to gain public support, and they need public support to increase the funds from the government and increase recruitment from the population. (Schiager 2011:92-93).

The Norwegian Armed Forces’ communication strategy derives from two paramount levels: NATO’s communication strategy and the political goals of

Norway's involvement in Afghanistan. In the document it is stated that communication and contact with the media in certain contexts constitute a "critical factor of success", and meeting the goals of the strategy will enable the Norwegian Armed Forces to obtain the "greatest support possible for the Norwegian Armed Forces" (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011). Thus, the strategy will constitute the core of the analysis in this thesis. The following three general goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy are listed in the document:

Achieve the greatest support possible for the Norwegian Armed Forces in the Norwegian public through as open, timely and honest information about the mission, organizing and effort of the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan, and their cooperation with other actors in the theatre, as possible.

Create understanding for Norway's role in NATO through communicating how the NATO-cooperation is closely linked to the ISAF-effort.

Substantiate NATO/ISAF communication.

(Norwegian Armed Forces 2011)

These are the paramount goals of the strategy. However, in order to analyse to what extent the media coverage fulfils the strategy, one needs to look at the more specific objectives listed. The thesis will draw upon four such specific goals.

*First*, the cooperation and mentoring of Afghan security forces is a topic referred to numerous times in the document. The strategy stresses that mentoring is one of the goals of the ISAF-mission, and thus "the communication-effort must place equal emphasis on the cooperation with Afghan security forces" (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011). This issue is a result of a decision made by NATO Heads of State and Government in 2009 to "oversee higher-level training for the Afghan National Army (ANA) and training and mentoring for the Afghan National Police (ANP)" (ISAF 2010).

The ANA and ANP is categorised under the umbrella of Afghanistan's National Security Forces (ANSF). The issue of mentoring was also emphasized by Grete Faremo, the Norwegian Minister of Defence, in her speech to Oslo Militære Samfund in January 2011: "The goal is that the in the spring of 2011, the Afghans will take on the responsibility of the first provinces" (Faremo January 2011). Moreover, two out of NATO's three strategic communication goals address the partnership with Afghan forces, and the transition of leadership to them (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011). Based on this it can be argued that a primary and specific goal of the communication strategy is to "*Communicate the cooperation and mentoring of Afghan security forces*".

*Second*, the strategy emphasises the importance of international cooperation as the foundation of the ISAF-mission. In the general goals already referred to, it is encouraged to "Create understanding for Norway's role in NATO through communicating how the NATO-cooperation is closely linked to the ISAF-effort." Moreover, it is specifically stated that "the communication shall attribute more emphasis on the international cooperation, which is a precondition for the entire ISAF-mission" (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011). Thus, a second central specific goal of the strategy is to: "*Communicate the importance of a broad international effort*".

*Third*, the strategy on numerous occasions discusses the object of creating an understanding of what the Norwegian Armed Forces' military mission entails and precisely what they do in Afghanistan. Through open and truthful communication about "the mission, organisation, and effort of Norwegian forces in Afghanistan", they seek to obtain "the greatest support possible" in the Norwegian population. Moreover, in the interview conducted with the chief of communication at the Norwegian Joint Headquarters, Petter Lindqvist, he describes the tasks and competence of the Norwegian Armed Forces as key objectives in the communication. This further underscores the important role of this goal in the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan 2011. Thus, the third specific goal derived from

the communication strategy is: *“Promote and explain the Norwegian Armed Forces’ tasks and competence”*.

*Fourth*, the document states that too much information about combat actions will give an “incorrect and fragmented image” of the Norwegian Armed Forces’ effort, and can ultimately “counteract the goals of the ISAF-operation”. The use of such a strong word as “counteract” indicate the potential risk a strong focus on combat actions represents to the Norwegian Armed Forces and ISAF. Thus, it can be argued that a fourth specific goal of the communication strategy is to *“Downplay combat actions”*.

To summarise: Based on the Norwegian Armed Forces’ communication strategy for Afghanistan 2011, the following four specific communication-goals have been identified as vital for the organisation, and will consequently be employed in the empirical analysis:

1. Communicate the cooperation and mentoring of Afghan security forces.
2. Communicate the importance of a broad international effort.
3. Promote and explain the Norwegian Armed Forces’ tasks and competence.
4. Downplay combat actions.

These four specific goals will be operationalised into variables that will be employed in order to analyse the content of the news coverage. Moreover, the strategy emphasises both media visits and embedding as means to fulfil the communication goals. This confirms the importance of these tools in the execution of the strategy.

In order to test the relevance of the goals derived from the communication strategy, the four goals presented above were discussed with a number of key informants. Petter Lindqvist, Chief of communication at the Norwegian Joint Headquarters of the Norwegian Armed Forces, confirms that the four goals is a precise interpretation of the strategy, and that a content analysis in light of these four communication goals can provide an indication

of to what extent the strategy is fulfilled by the coverage. Aftenposten's correspondent in Afghanistan, Kristin Solberg describes the four goals as "fairly accurate" according to her experience. Moreover, Dagbladet's reporter Einar Hagvaag, who has travelled independently in Afghanistan on several occasions, but who also stayed in the Norwegian camps after the four soldiers were killed, confirms that these are the communication goals the Norwegian Armed Forces work towards: "This is what they emphasise when you talk to them. This is what they are interested in communicating."

### 3.2.2 News norms: "*Vær varsom-plakaten*"

According to McCombs' model, an important aspect to take into account when studying media-state relations is the news norms and traditions of journalism. In the context of this thesis, the ethical norms of Norwegian journalism are arguably the most relevant factor to consider. Thus, McCombs' "news norms" will here be understood as the ethical norms of journalism. Such ethical norms are also emphasised by McCombs as influential to the media agenda (McCombs 2004:112). The ethical norms of Norwegian journalism are largely founded on "*Vær Varsom-plakaten*", or the "Code of Ethics" (Norsk Presseforbund 2005)<sup>11</sup>, and can implicitly affect the issues covered by the media through its encouragement of communicating "different views" and "critical perspectives" (Norsk Presseforbund 2005). The norms can also help the journalists to act as objective as possible, and to exclude information that solely serves the interests of their sources. Thus, the ethical norms of journalism can potentially counteract the Norwegian Armed Forces' effort to communicate the goals of their communication strategy.

"*Vær varsom-plakaten*" is a set of journalistic ethical norms which Norwegian media strive to obey and respect. The "rules" have been developed by the Norwegian Press Association, and are based on three paramount issues: the journalistic product, the journalist's relationship with its sources and the

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<sup>11</sup> The "Program" of Norsk Journalistlag could also have constituted a useful ethical framework of Norwegian journalism, but contains several chapters not relevant to this thesis, and also overlaps with "*Vær varsom-plakaten*" on several issues.



journalist's professional integrity (Ottosen, Røssland og Østbye 2002:115). The first version of "Vær Varsom-plakaten" was published in 1936, and has been revised several times. The thesis will draw upon four of the "rules" listed in "Vær varsom-plakaten" found most relevant to the study at hand:

1.2 The press maintains important tasks such as information, debate and a critical perspective on society. The press has a particular responsibility to ensure that different views are communicated.

1.3 The press should protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of press and the principal of non-disclosed information ["offentlighetsprinsippet"]. The press can't give in to pressure from anyone who seeks to hinder an open debate, free flow of information or free access to sources.

2.2 Each newsroom and every reporter must protect their integrity and credibility to be able to act free and independent in relation with individuals or groups who, for ideological, financial or other reasons, seek to influence the editorial content.

3.2 Be critical in the selection of sources, and make sure that the information given is correct. It is considered good journalistic ethic to strive to achieve a broad and relevant selection of sources.

(Norsk Presseforbund 2005)

An important aspect of "Vær Varsom-plakaten" is the relationship between the journalists and their sources. Sigurd Allern (1997) addresses this issue, organising the sources in three categories: "organisations of professional sources", "other organisations of sources" and "personal sources". Allern emphasises the powerful role of "organisations of professional sources". Such organisations have a specialised staff in charge of public relations, often with experience from journalism and with many contacts within both politics and media (Allern 1997:10).

One example of "organisations of professional sources" is the Norwegian Armed Forces. Allern (2001) argues that the Norwegian Armed Forces have the largest public relations-department in Norway, and Anders

Sømme Hammer states that “the Norwegian Armed Forces have a huge information organisation, and use it to meet their goals”. The influence and power of the PR-organisation of the Norwegian Armed Forces is supported by the results from Respons Analyse’s survey with 500 journalists (2011). 62 per cent of the journalists answered that if Norwegian soldiers have been involved in an accident, they get their information through the communication department of Norwegian Armed Forces.

Within “organisations of professional sources”, we also find what Mark Fishman labels “authorised knowers” (Fishman 1980 quoted in Allern 1997:41). Journalists use these persons extensively as sources due to the authority attributed to their position, and because they provide accessible and understandable information. With regards to the Norwegian Armed Forces and the individual soldier as an authorised knower, their position becomes even stronger because the knowledge on military issues is limited in most newsrooms (Allern 1997:208; Diesen quoted in Journalisten January 15. 2010). Moreover, as a result of the decrease in personnel employed in the Norwegian Armed Forces by mandatory service, the general knowledge on the Norwegian Armed Forces in the Norwegian population has decreased, thus increasing the credibility of the authorised knowers (Schiager 2011:14). This gives the key sources in the military organisation “increased power to influence the content and framing of the coverage” (Allern 1997:208). Allern argues that accepting information on the terms of the military organisation undermines the trust the audience have in the journalists’ loyalty to them (1997:218).

### *3.2.3 Media agenda: Indexing, framing and other characteristics*

The inner core of McCombs’ “onion” is the media agenda, which represents the messages communicated to the audience through media’s coverage. Thus, it will be measured, among other variables, to what extent the four communication goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces are fulfilled by the media agenda. When analysing the media agenda, Bennett’s theory of indexing will also be applied. Indexing is a way of practicing journalism, and will help

us to understand how and why the journalists produce the media agenda presented in the coverage. Furthermore, to incorporate that theory in McCombs' onion will further strengthen the applicability of the model to the research question at hand. Originally, Bennett dealt largely with governmental officials when discussing the concept, but he also states that the information is heavily structured by other elite cues and official information (Bennett 1994:26-28). In a more general setting, the concept of indexing implies that "News generally reflects the story lines of those with the a) greatest power to affect the situation or issue, b) the greatest institutional capacity to engage government news "flywheels" or c) the best communications operations" (Bennett et. al. 2008:63). As briefly described earlier, Bennett has found that "patterns of foreign policy news (diversity of sources, range of viewpoints and policy options) can be explained by the tendency to 'index' news coverage" (Bennett 1994:25). Indexing can also be described as a "weighting system for what gets into the news, what prominence it receives, how long it gets covered, and who gets the voice on the stories" (Bennett et. al. 2007:49 quoted in McQuail 2010:243). The ability of the sources to influence who gets interviewed and what stories are reported, results in what Bennett labels "officialised news" (Bennett 1994:23). Applied to the context of media visits and embedding in Afghanistan, the theory arguably suggests that it is the official sources on the military bases that will determine who gets interviewed and what topics are being covered in the media agenda. Moreover, Bennett argues that the same sources are also "active players in the press management game, applying various techniques of strategic communications" (Bennett 1994:29).

The notion of indexing is in line with the influence McCombs' attributes to the news sources. However, Bennett arguably differs from McCombs' on one aspect. Bennett does not attribute the same ability as McCombs to the ethical norms of journalism in counteracting the news source. Bennett does acknowledge that journalists are concerned with including different perspectives, but only when there is a debate within the official circles (Bennett

1994:24). Moreover, he argues that press may be seen as “abdicating its traditional mandate to raise an independent ‘voice of the people’ under appropriate circumstances” (1990:106). As a consequence, Bennett has been criticised by Scott L. Althaus et. al. (1996) for downplaying the role of journalistic norms. Studying the U.S.-Libya crisis of 1985-86, they found that reporters who follow journalistic norms may create a “more diverse and oppositional discourse” and that the media may “in some circumstances exert a greater degree of control over their texts than predicted by the indexing hypothesis” (1996:418). Thus, and for the purpose of this study, it will be important to see if the ethical norms of Norwegian journalism are salient in the coverage produced in Afghanistan, and what potential impact it may have. In addition, Bennett’s theory will also be employed when discussing the theoretical implications of the findings.

When explaining the effects of indexing, Bennett presents an example from the political process leading up to the first Gulf War: “By accepting the frames offered by Bush, the press helped to limit debate [...]” (Dorman 1991 quoted in Bennett 1994:26). This brings us to the concept of “framing” the media agenda.

Within media research, framing has been defined in different ways, and has also been employed in different contexts (McCombs 2004:89). In terms of agenda-setting, Robert Entman provides a useful definition of framing:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.

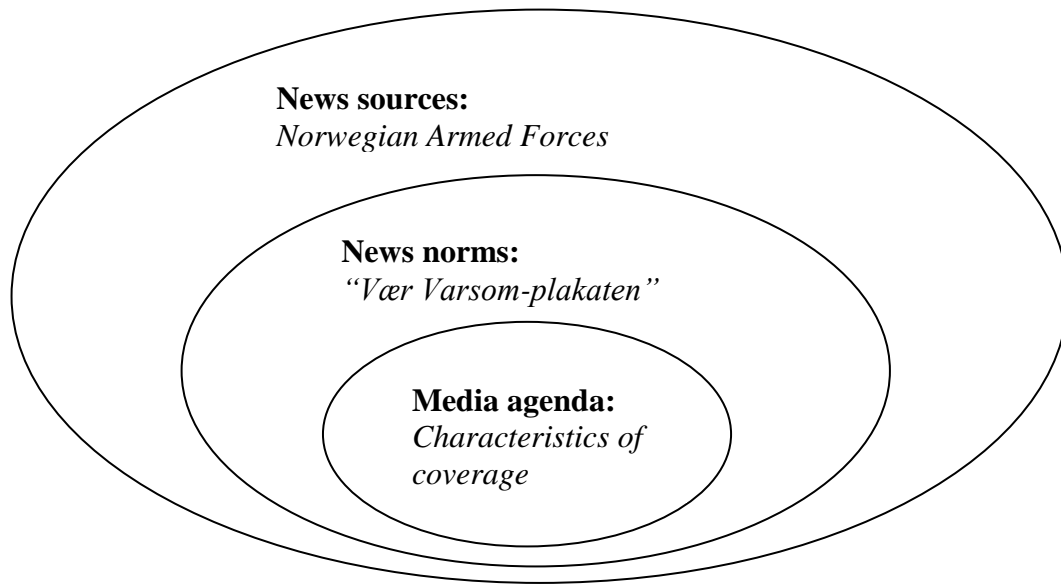
(Entman 1993 quoted in McCombs 2004:87)

For practicing journalists, framing relates to what he or she chooses to focus on when telling a story. Most important is how the title, introduction and first section of the text are framed. Newspaper stories employ a “relevance structure” where the most important and interesting features of the story comes

first, thus the story communicates the “macrostructure” in its title and first sentences (Van Dijk 1985:122-123). A frame has the power to structure our thoughts and influence how we think about a political issue or other objects in the news. With regards to the media agenda, a frame can be understood as the “central organizing idea” that provides the audience with a context and meaning through “selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard et. al. quoted in McCombs 2004:87). Bennett argues that “the growing sophistication of press management techniques holds the constant possibility that some officials will be more successful engineering favourable media framings for their positions than others” (Bennett 1994:29).

Thus, when investigating the characteristics of the media coverage from Afghanistan, framing will be an important characteristic to include in the empirical analysis. For this thesis, it will be most relevant to investigate the *tone* of the frames, namely if they are positive or critical. First of all, this will allow for an analysis of in which light the Norwegian mission in Afghanistan, and their communication goals, are presented to the public. Secondly, it will allow for an analysis of to what extent the journalistic ethical norm of “critical perspectives” is met by the coverage.

Together, the concepts of indexing and framing will hopefully help to increase our understanding of the nature and characteristics of the coverage, and provide insight into the media-state relation. Having explained the theoretical framework of this thesis, an adapted version of McCombs’ “onion” of media agenda-setting can be presented:



**Model 3.2 Adapted version of McCombs' "onion" of media agenda-setting.**

### **3.3 Hypotheses**

On the basis of the theoretical framework presented above, the research questions will be operationalised into three hypotheses. The hypotheses constitute an important tool in providing answers to those questions.

*First*, McCombs states that the role of news norms differs from culture to culture. In the context of this thesis, media visits and embedding arguably constitute a distinct culture of journalism due to the exceptional circumstances with regards to restrictions, location and method of reporting. Furthermore, Bennett's theory of indexing argues that the media agenda will index the opinions of the official sources present. Thus, when studying the characteristics of the coverage produced by journalists visiting the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

### Hypothesis #1

In the artificial “culture” of media visits and embedding, the characteristics of the media coverage will show that Norwegian journalists leave behind central ethical norms of journalism such as the number and diversity of sources, critical perspectives and free flow of information.

*Second*, McCombs’ theory suggests that when the news norms are not present, the news sources will be able to shape the media agenda. However, Bennett argues that the success of the sources’ communication depends on the “sophistication of press management techniques” (Bennett 1994:29). Thus, the following hypothesis can be presented:

### Hypothesis #2

When the journalists in large depend on official information, issues such as tasks, competence, and the role of the international effort are fulfilled by the coverage. However, the Norwegian Armed Forces fail to downplay combat action and fail to communicate the more specific goal of mentoring the Afghan forces.

*Third*, according to hypotheses 1 and 2, one could expect that the empirical findings are not in complete congruence with both McCombs’ theory of media agenda-setting and Bennett’s theory of indexing. Thus, a final hypothesis can be formulated:

### Hypothesis #3

The empirical findings are expected to show that the media reflect the opinions of the sources only to a certain extent. Hence, it is necessary to open for a discussion of the established theories of media-state relations, and the extent to which they cover all relevant factors.

## 4.0 Methodology

The research questions presented in this thesis yield certain analytical challenges because they address both the characteristics of the media agenda communicated, as well as the factors with the potential to influence that agenda. This constitutes two different analytical levels, the second requiring an analysis of more hidden mechanisms. Thus, in order to test the hypotheses and provide answers to the research questions, method triangulation will be applied in order to ensure the methodological robustness of the thesis. Method triangulation can be defined as the use of “more than one method or source of data [...]” in a study (Bryman 2008:379). Eugene J. Webb et. al. argue that the most persuasive evidence “comes through a triangulation of measurement processes” (1966:3).

The core of the methodological approach is the quantitative content analysis. In addition, two supplementing methods have been included, namely a qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The three empirical studies will hopefully provide an extensive collection of data that will enable well-founded answers to the research questions.

### 4.1 Quantitative content analysis

In order to investigate the newspaper articles produced by Norwegian journalists in Afghanistan, a quantitative content analysis will be conducted. Quantitative content analysis can be defined as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson quoted in Hansen et. al. 1998:94). This is often considered to be a necessary tool when studying mass communications (Riffe, Lacy and Fico 2005:39), and will thus be highly important when seeking to answer the research questions at hand.



#### *4.1.1 Sample*

A sample can be defined as a “subset of units from the entire population being studied” (Riffe et. al. 2005:95). When conducting a quantitative content analysis, one must choose the units carefully, and consider the level of analysis most suitable to the research questions. This can either be a volume of a newspaper, a single newspaper, an article or a word (Østbye et. al. 2002:219). Because this thesis seeks to analyse the news coverage and to what extent the coverage produced in Afghanistan fulfils the goals of the communication strategy, it is most relevant to look at the individual articles. Moreover, this is the level most commonly employed in quantitative content analysis (Østbye et. al. 2002:221). The sample does not include editorials since journalists who travel to Afghanistan rarely write them. It can be argued that the editorials represent the official view of the newspaper, and could thus potentially affect the attitudes of the reporters. However, due to the fact that they are produced in the different news rooms in Norway, and not in Afghanistan, they are not suited to be a part of the sample.

With regards to sampling dates, the population of units consists of articles produced in the period from June 29. 2010 to June 30. 2011. This period has been chosen for several reasons. First, the most recent communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces’ in Afghanistan applies to 2011. In order to maximize the relevance of this thesis, it is that version that has been applied. Second, due to the fact that the research for this thesis started in July 2011, the latter half of 2011 could not be included in the sample. However, according to Petter Lindqvist and the Norwegian Armed Forces, the communication strategy is also relevant and applicable to the last six months of 2010. Thus, the original period was set from July 1. 2010 to June 30. 2011. When studying the material, it was discovered that Norwegian journalists had arrived at the Norwegian camp in Mazar-e-Sharif on June 29. 2010, due to the four Norwegian soldiers killed on June 27. 2010. As a consequence, the sample was initiated two days earlier.

In order to identify the individual articles, the text-database Retriever is employed. All national and regional newspapers in Norway are included, both paper and online editions. The smaller, locally based newspapers, however, are not included. As explained in chapter 3.2, they seldom have the resources to send their journalists to Afghanistan. Moreover, the sample does not include TV-broadcasts, because a content analysis of TV-broadcasts requires a different approach than an analysis of articles. They have a different structure, images play a far more important role, and thus it will be problematic to include them in the same sample as the articles in the quantitative analysis.

Using Retriever, I searched for hits on the word “Afghanistan” within the category of “norske aviser” and “web”. The search resulted in 48.092 hits. Through a thorough screening of those hits, all of the articles produced by journalists either on media visits or while embedded were identified. This resulted in 74 articles. The Norwegian Armed Forces also provided a list of journalists that had visited the bases in the period referred to above. To ensure that no articles were left out, the 74 articles were compared to that list. As a result of this thorough and broad approach, the sample of units constitutes the entire population of articles produced by Norwegian journalists in Afghanistan, either on media visits or through embedding, in the last six months of 2010 and the first six months of 2011.<sup>12</sup> Only 1 out of the 74 articles was written by an embedded journalist. This means that the vast majority of articles were produced by journalists on media visits.

#### *4.1.2 Variables<sup>13</sup>*

The units under investigation have been analysed through two groups of variables: “General characteristics of the coverage” and “The fulfilment of the communication strategy”.

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<sup>12</sup> A control group will not be included because the thesis does not set out to infer causality.

<sup>13</sup> For a more thorough description the variables, see the coding manual in appendix D.

### ***A. General Characteristics of the coverage***

The first group consists of six variables addressing the general characteristics of the articles.<sup>14</sup> Hopefully, the results of these six variables will help to increase our understanding of the nature of the coverage, and allow for a profound answer to the first research question.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, these variables are important in order to discuss the role of journalistic norms, and the larger issue of the media-state relation.

#### 1. Type of sources

This variable provides useful information regarding which type of sources are given access to the newspapers' columns when the journalists visit the Norwegian military in Afghanistan. This is particularly interesting with regards to McCombs' theoretical model, the concept of indexing, and the potential influence news sources have on the media agenda. The values of this variable include 1) military or the police, 2) politicians, 3) humanitarian representatives, 4) scholars, 5) civilians, or 6) the Taliban or war-lords.

#### 2. Number of sources

In order to provide an indication of the thoroughness, time and resources devoted to the articles, it is measured how many sources the journalists have interviewed. As stated in "Vær varsom plakaten", it is a journalistic ideal to include as many sources as possible. The number of sources thus says something about the journalistic quality of the article (Nordby 2009:33).

#### 3. Framing

As explained in chapter 3.2.3, an important concept within content analysis of news items is "framing". For this thesis, the most relevant has been to

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<sup>14</sup> Whether or not the article is referred to on the front page will not be coded. Because an online article always is referred to on the front, this will not be relevant to measure.

<sup>15</sup> The first two variables have been extracted from an analysis of the general Afghanistan coverage from 2001-2008, conducted by Kristin Jonassen Nordby (2009). Nordby's sample includes 399 articles from Aftenposten and Dagsavisen written on the war in Afghanistan, regardless of where the journalists were reporting from. This comparative perspective will allow for a more elaborate discussion of the data

investigate the *tone* of the frames employed. The values range from 1) positive, 2) neutral to 3) critical. When measuring these values, it will also contribute to our understanding of in which light the communication goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces are presented.

#### 4. Genre

This is a descriptive variable employed mostly to achieve an understanding of what kind of articles are being produced in Afghanistan, and how the journalists choose to present their stories. The values for this variable are 1) news article, 2) interview, 3) reportage, 4) feature, 5) comment/background and 6) other.<sup>16</sup>

#### 5. Topic of article

The thesis also analyse the key topic presented in the articles. This allows for a discussion on what specific issues the article addresses. The variable includes the following values: 1) effects of the Norwegian effort, 2) combat actions, 3) casualties, 4) the everyday-life of the soldiers, 5) equipment and personnel, 6) security-situation and 7) other.<sup>17</sup> It is worth mentioning that the value “combat actions” overlaps with one of the variables derived from the communication strategy. However, this is a necessary value for this variable, because it constitutes an important topic when analysing the characteristics of war coverage.

#### 6. Month

Due to the expected impact the four Norwegian casualties had on the coverage conducted by journalists visiting the Norwegian military in Afghanistan, it has been important to find out how many of the articles were produced as a direct consequence of the four casualties. This helps increase our understanding of how much explanatory power should be attributed to that tragic event when discussing the empirical data.

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<sup>16</sup> See coding manual (appendix D) for explanations and definitions of the different genres.

<sup>17</sup> Though “other” is a value with a relatively low frequency in the articles, it would have been beneficial for the analysis to extract “humanitarian situation” as a separate topic to visualise its absence from the coverage.

### ***B. The fulfilment of the communication strategy***

The second group of variables refers to the four goals deducted from the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy. These have been employed in order to measure to what extent the media agenda reflects the strategy, and are highly important in order to answer the second research question. The variables reflecting the communication strategy are the following four:

#### **1. Mentoring**

One of the goals in the communication strategy is to communicate the cooperation and mentoring of Afghan security forces. In order to provide an indication of how salient mentoring is in the articles written from Afghanistan, the content has been measured on this variable, with values ranging from “no”, “mentioned” to “main focus” depending on the salience of the issue throughout the article.

#### **2. International effort**

The communication strategy also stresses that the Norwegian mission is a part of a larger international effort. This variable indicates whether the articles address Norway's membership in NATO as a precondition for the mission in Afghanistan, describe the conflict as a NATO/ISAF-mission or describe the cooperation with other NATO/ISAF-countries in Afghanistan. The values “no”, “mentioned” and “main focus” indicate the salience of the international effort throughout the article.

#### **3. Tasks and competence**

The Norwegian Armed Forces are also concerned with communicating the tasks and competence of the soldiers. When coding this variable, it is analysed whether the articles describe the specific tasks of a soldier, what they have been trained to do or the competence inherent in the Norwegian troops. The values of the variable range from “no”, “mentioned” to “main focus”

depending on the salience of the tasks and competence of the Norwegian Armed Forces throughout the article.

#### 4. Combat

According to the communication strategy, it is regarded as problematic by the Norwegian Armed Forces if combat action receives much focus in the articles. Thus, this has been yet another important variable to measure. Depending on the salience of combat throughout the article, the values range from “no”, “mentioned” and “main focus”. Road bombs constitute combat action in this context.

### **4.2 Supplementing the quantitative analysis.**

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the quantitative content analysis is the central methodological approach of the thesis. However, it is arguably not a sufficient tool, because it is too structural and superficial and does not allow for the nuances necessary to achieve the deep understanding this study aims at providing. Thus, in order to sophisticate the thesis and provide a more in-depth analysis of the coverage produced in Afghanistan, a qualitative content analysis will be conducted. Also, semi-structured interviews with six key informants are carried out in order to give further insight into how journalists cover the war, and to help improve our understanding of the mechanisms of the relationship between the media and the state.

#### *4.2.1 Qualitative content analysis*

The qualitative content analysis constitutes an important supplement to the quantitative analysis due to its ability to analyse the deeper structures of the content. This is also why Ole Holsti recommends that the two methods should be combined in order to “supplement each other” (Holsti quoted in Riffe et. al. 2005:36).

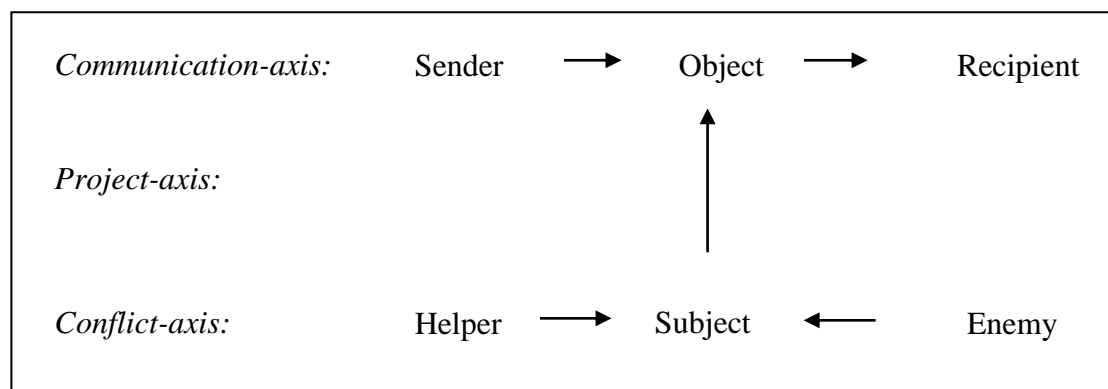
The chosen case is the NRK-documentary “Norge i krig – Oppdrag Afghanistan”. The documentary was produced by embedded journalists and

broadcasted on NRK in April and May 2011. Thus, the analysis will hopefully also increase our understanding of embedding, and the messages communicated through that method of reporting. The documentary, presented over six episodes and lasting more than 3 hours in total, is a pioneering depiction of the Norwegian mission that provides a unique and influential close up portrayal of the Norwegian mission in Afghanistan. Due to its relevance, the six episodes of the documentary constitute the units for the qualitative content analysis. The focus of this analysis is mainly centred on the variables derived from the communication strategy, and how the documentary is framed. The documentary also provides important insight into the mechanisms operating when journalists live with the soldiers and join them in combat.

A qualitative content analysis differs from the quantitative in that it searches for “the underlying themes in the material being analysed” (Bryman 2008:529), and seeks to interpret and not count the content. Compared to the quantitative content analysis, the qualitative approach does not have a highly structured research approach (Østbye et. al. 2002:67). However, there are some guidelines that facilitate the analysis. One of these is to determine what kind of discourse the text represents. Discourse in this context refers to how the text organises its message. One way to categorise a text is to determine which of the following three discourses it applies: a descriptive discourse, a story, or an argumentative discourse (Østbye et. al. 2002:71). A descriptive text emphasises the physical connections between the elements addressed in the text. A story goes further, emphasising connections between the elements in terms of time and causality. It also highlights “human interest”, and often centres on a subject. This discourse is much employed in factual texts such as news and documentaries. Lastly, the argumentative discourse seeks to convince the audience about an issue. Editorials, political speeches and commercials are typical examples of the argumentative discourse.

With regards to the documentary “Norge i krig”, it arguably employs a “story”-discourse. This will be further elaborated in the analysis, but is necessary to state here in order to present the methodological approach. When

analysing the topic in a “story”, the model developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas, known as the actantial model, is often employed (Østbye et. al. 2002:76) (model 4.1). Greimas starts off with the assumption that the story has a *subject* that seeks to obtain something. This “something” is categorised as an *object*, and can either be a thing, a person or a value. The project cannot be completed without conflict. The *subject* faces resistance from its *enemies*, but also receives assistance from its *helpers*. The structures of the story can be translated into a model consisting of three axis and six actants:



**Model 4.1 Greimas' actantial model (Greimas in Østbye et. al. 2002:76).**

Through replacing the different actants in the model with the actants in the documentary, it will be easier to identify what messages the documentary communicates, whether the four specific goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy are fulfilled, and how those issues are framed.

#### 4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews constitute yet another valuable addition to the methodological approach of this study, because they substantiate the analysis, provide nuanced perspectives to the results and deepen our understanding of how the journalists work when they report from an armed conflict.

Semi-structured interviews are useful as a method because they provide the researcher with an interview guide (see appendix A and B), making it easier to compare the answers, but at the same time allowing the researcher to pose additional questions where relevant (Bryman 2008:438). It also allows the



researcher to start of with the easier questions, providing the interviewee with a “comfort level”, before more critical questions can be asked. (Rubin and Rubin 2005:117). Such interviews are, together with unstructured interviews, often categorised as qualitative interviews.

The interviews conducted in this thesis (in which some of the results have already been referred to) can be categorized as topical interviews which “explore what, when, how, why, or with what consequence something happened” (Rubin and Rubin 2005:11). Due to the time and space available, the interviews have been limited to six key informants. A key informant is a knowledgeable source with relevant first-hand experience and insight into the research problem (Rubin and Rubin 2005:65).

I have chosen one journalist from each of the newspapers with the highest frequency of articles analysed in this thesis: Rune Thomas Ege (VG), Einar Hagvaag (Dagbladet) and Kristin Solberg (Aftenposten). In addition, Marius Arnesen (NRK) and the independent journalist Anders Sømme Hammer are included in the sample. The three interviews with the Norwegian Armed Forces’ chief of communication, Petter Lindqvist, complement our understanding of the communication strategy and the methods of communication employed.<sup>18</sup>

## **4.3 Maintaining reliability and validity**

### *4.3.1 Reliability*

Riffe et al. argue that quantitative content analysis is a reliable method, because it employs explicitly defined and accepted concept definitions that “control assignment of content to particular categories” (2005:123). The method is also unobtrusive, thus not risking any reactive effect (Bryman 2008:288-289). Yet, a common critique of the content analysis is that it can never be truly objective because it depends on the perception and impressions of the individual coder. This can threaten the inter-coder reliability of the research, being defined as

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<sup>18</sup> See appendix C for a more thorough description of the interviews and the key informants.

“the degree to which two or more individuals agree about the coding of an item” (Bryman 2008:694). As a result, many have omitted the word “objective” from the definition of the quantitative content analysis (Hansen et. al. 1998:95). However, this threat can be reduced when operating with a thorough and precise coding manual and schedule, as provided in this thesis. A coding schedule is where the researcher enters the data from the analysis. For the quantitative analysis, the database SPSS has been used to register the result. Moreover, the coding manual (see appendix D) provides instructions to coders about the variables and their respective values. The structure and transparency in the process of assigning raw material to the categories limit personal biases and increase the intra-coder reliability of the method. As a consequence, replications are made feasible (Bryman 2008:274-283). Thus, despite the objectivity-critique, it can be argued that the definition is still valid when taking measures to ensure objectivity in the research.

Another important factor that has been considered is that the variables must be closely linked to the research question, the values of each variable must be mutually exclusive, and they must be exhaustive so that the coder has all necessary values available (Bryman 2008:223-288). To maintain the reliability of the analysis, parts of the material were initially coded, before the coding schedule and manual were revised. This has ensured that the coding schedule and manual are as precise and suitable for the material as possible. The limited timeframe of the thesis has not allowed for coding the entire sample two times. Yet another strength of the method is that it provides displayable results (Bryman 2008:289).

With regards to conducting interviews, the structure of semi-structured interviews maximizes their reliability (Bryman 2008:437). A methodological challenge is that disturbing elements like noise and interruptions can potentially affect the informants’ answers, thus threatening the reliability (Hellevik 2002 quoted in Nordby 2009:42). This was prevented by either doing the interviews in a quiet setting, or by scheduling a phone-interview in advance so that the interviewees could devote their full attention to the interview.

#### *4.3.2 Validity*

A representative sample is “essential for making valid inference to that population” (Riffe et. al. 2005:106). Having included the entire population of articles relevant to the communication strategy, the sample for the quantitative content analysis is not just representative, it is all-encompassing. The representativeness of a sample is crucial for the external validity defined as “whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context in which it was constructed” (Bryman 2008:694). When including the entire population of units in the quantitative content analysis, the results of this study to a large extent meet the requirements for external validity.

Given the central role and attention the Norwegian media have given to the Norwegian Armed Forces’ mission in Afghanistan, it was expected that the entire population of articles would be larger than 74 articles. The limited number of units makes it problematic to present the empirical data in percentage. As a consequence, the empirical data will be presented as absolute values unless they are being compared to data from Kristin Nordby’s study of Norwegian media’s Afghanistan coverage (2009). Although a comparison of the two datasets may be criticised because Nordby’s sample is much larger (399 articles) than the sample in this study, it will still provide an interesting comparative perspective to the analysis.

Moreover, as will be described, 52 out of the 74 articles were produced in the two months following the four Norwegian casualties. It is important to be aware of these characteristics when discussing the results, and to understand the data in light of the circumstances in which the articles were produced. However, because the sample includes the entire population of articles, it will allow for an accurate analysis of the total coverage in the period relevant to the communication strategy for the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan 2011. This analysis will help to increase our understanding of the coverage and provide indications of how successful the Norwegian Armed Forces are in fulfilling their communication goals. Moreover, this will hopefully constitute a

valuable platform for discussing theoretical implications for the media-state relation.

With regards to the quantitative analysis, “Norge i krig” is the only documentary that follows the Norwegian soldiers in battle to that extent, and over so many episodes.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, it had an average audience of 285 000 viewers (NRK [email] August 4. 2011). This increases its relevance, but it is at the same time problematic to generalise based on this case alone. Thus, the qualitative analysis constitutes only one of the methodological approaches of this study. Addressing the interviews, the six interviewees are all key informants that represent the most relevant factors analysed in this study. The five journalists represent all of the elite media, and Lindqvist is the head of communication of international operations in the Norwegian Armed Forces.

Face validity is also important to consider when evaluating a research method. Face validity is the “concern with whether an indicator appears to reflect the content of the concept in question” (Bryman 2008:694). The first group of variables consists of key variables regarding the characteristics of media coverage, and most of them are also closely connected to the ethical norms of journalism. With regards to the second groups of variables, they are deducted from the communication strategy for Afghanistan 2011, and their validity has been confirmed by Petter Lindqvist. Thus it can be argued that the variables reflect the issues this thesis seeks to address. The face validity is further increased by method triangulation. The interviews make it possible to ask the actors questions about issues directly related to the research question, and the qualitative content analysis will provide a deeper understanding of the media coverage.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> TV 2 is expected to air a documentary produced by embedded journalists in the late fall of 2011. Moreover, in the fall of 2010, TV3 sent the documentary “Livredderne i Afghanistan”, consisting of two episodes, about the medical personnel in the Norwegian Aeromedical Detachment. Due to the narrow scope of the documentary and its limited time frame, it is not as relevant for this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> Internal validity is arguable less relevant with regard to this thesis, because it has not aimed at proving causality.

## 5.0 Results

As we recall, this thesis has set out to analyse the characteristics of the coverage produced in Afghanistan, by journalists either on media visits or while embedded, and to what extent the coverage fulfils the goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication strategy. This chapter will seek to concisely present the findings from the quantitative and qualitative content analysis respectively.

The overarching aim of the chapter is to provide empirical data that will constitute a solid foundation for answering the three research questions at hand. These research questions will be addressed in chapter 6, "Discussion", where the data will be analysed more thoroughly together with the results from the semi-structured interviews, and discussed in light of the theoretical framework described in chapter 3.

### 5.1 Quantitative content analysis

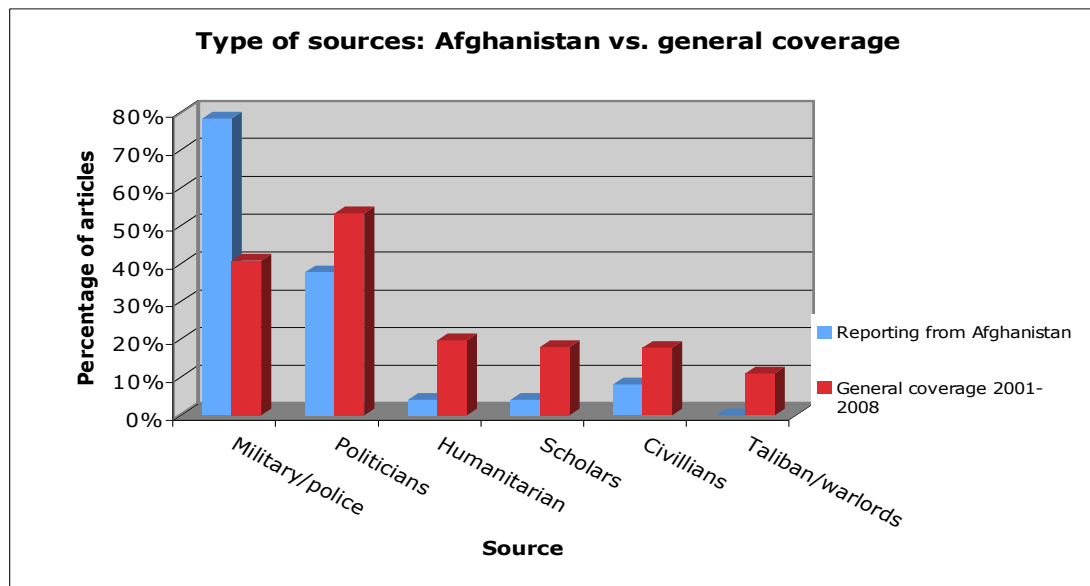
The quantitative content analysis consists of two groups of variables, namely the "General characteristics of the coverage" and "The fulfilment of the communication strategy". The first group includes six variables regarding the characteristics of the coverage and the ethical norms of journalism.

#### *A. General characteristics of the coverage*

##### *5.1.1 Type of sources*

Figure 5.1 presented below shows that when reporting solely from Afghanistan, the journalists interviewed sources from the military and police in close to 80 per cent of the articles (blue pillar). When Kristin Nordby analysed the Norwegian media's Afghanistan coverage, including all relevant articles regardless of where they were produced, she found that the journalists included sources from the military or police in less than 40 per cent of the articles (red

pillar) (Nordby 2009). This comparison indicates that when reporting solely from Afghanistan, the journalists give the military and police far more attention. Oppositely, Nordby's sample employed more politicians.



**Figure 5.1 Type of sources in articles. Coverage produced in Afghanistan (Series1) vs. general coverage (Series2) (percentage [N=74, N=399]).<sup>21</sup>**

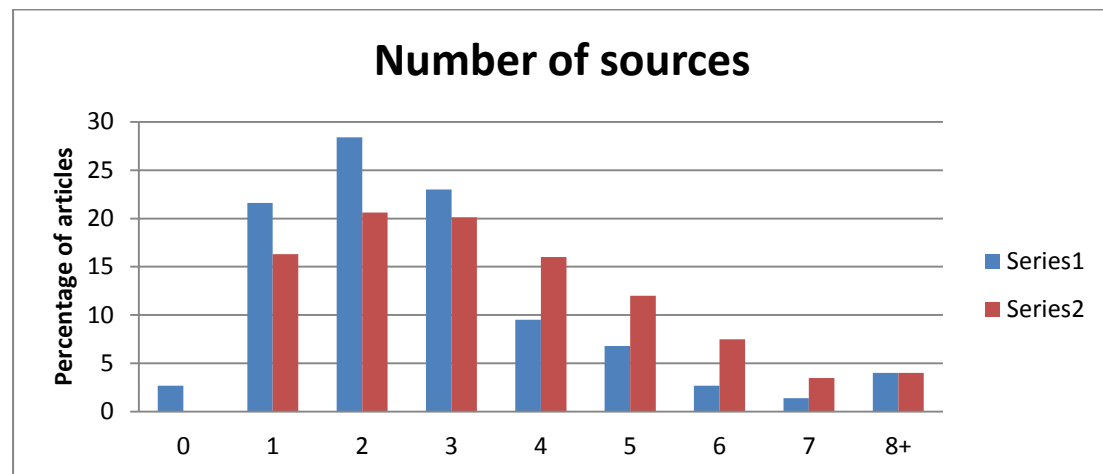
The disparity of sources in the sample analysed here is also more limited than in the coverage analysed by Nordby. Nordby's sample has a higher frequency of scholarly, humanitarian, civilian and Taliban-sources.

### 5.1.2 Number of sources

Also the number of sources interviewed in each article provides enlightening information about the nature of the coverage. Compared to Nordby's sample, the figure below illustrates the differences. As many as 39 of the articles produced by journalists visiting the Norwegian military in Afghanistan (Series1), employ two sources or less. This constitutes more than 50 per cent of the articles. The corresponding share for Nordby's sample (Series2) is 37 per

<sup>21</sup> This variable was coded using another program than the rest. The raw data is unfortunately not possible to present in appendix E as the other variables are, but can be provided on request.

cent. When looking at articles with more than three sources, we see that the frequency is higher in Nordby's sample on all but one value.

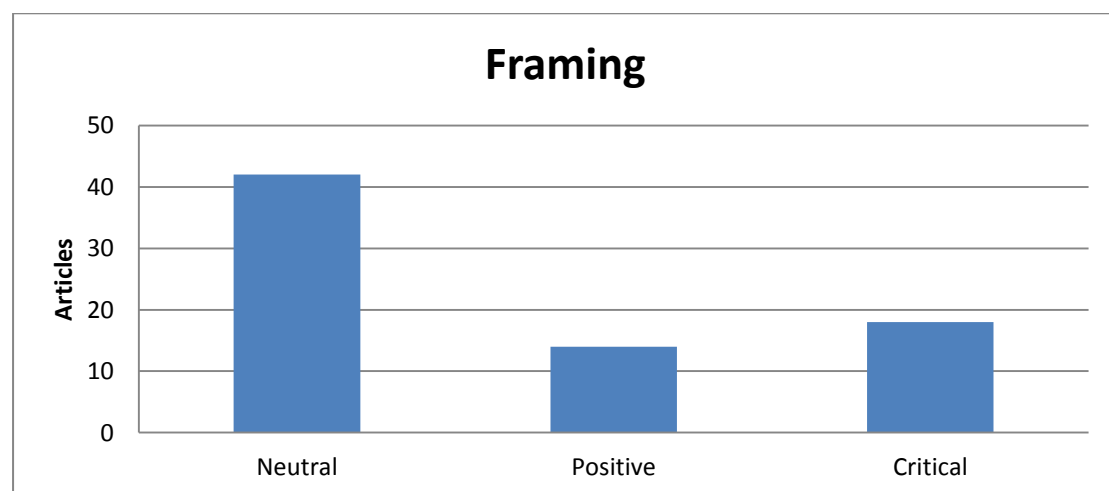


**Figure 5.2 Number of sources in article. Coverage produced in Afghanistan (Series1) vs. general coverage (Series2) (percentage [N=74, N=399]).**

These data indicate that when journalists report from Afghanistan, they interview fewer sources than they would have done if they reported from Norway.

### 5.1.3 Framing

One of the key features of any article, and a feature especially interesting with regards to a communication strategy and the subsequent media agenda presented, is how it is framed.

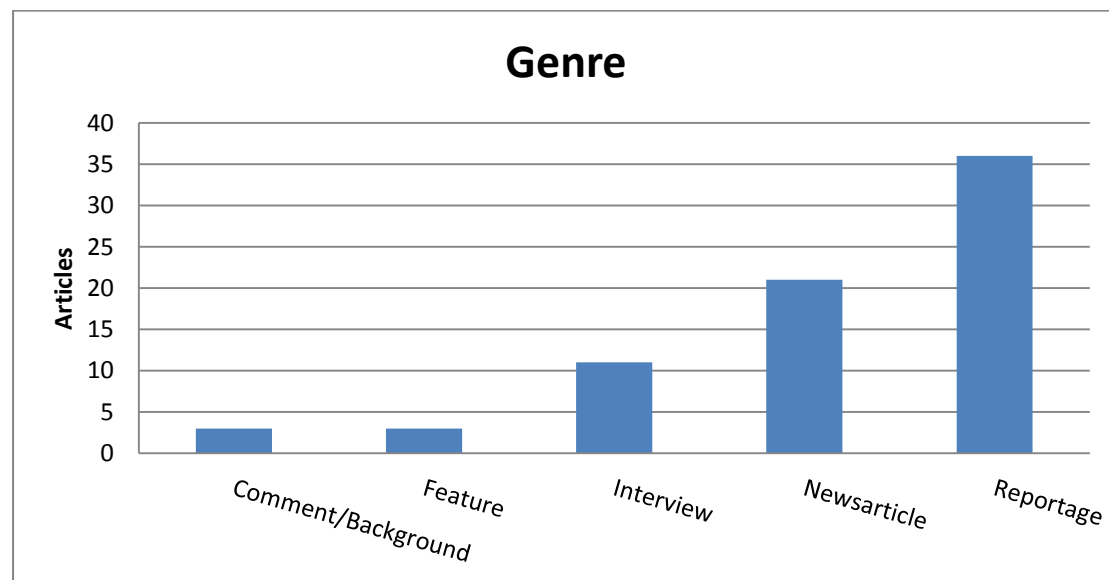


**Figure 5.3 Frequency of frames in articles (absolute value [N=74]).**

Figure 5.3 shows the distribution of the tone of the framing in the entire population of articles. It can be observed that 14 of the articles are positively framed, and as much as 42 articles employ a neutral frame. Combining these two shows that 56 articles are either positive or neutral in their framing. Moreover, only 18 articles are critical towards the Norwegian Armed Forces, their mission or its results. Though there are more critical than positive frames, we see that the combination of neutral and positive frames heavily outnumbers the critical ones.

#### 5.1.4 Genre

Moving on to the different genres employed in the 74 articles, figure 5.4 shows that the reportage has the highest frequency, and is employed in 36 articles. A reportage allows the reporter to show his or her presence on the location, and provides “sent and colour” to the story.



**Figure 5.4 Frequency of genres of article (absolute value [N=74]).**

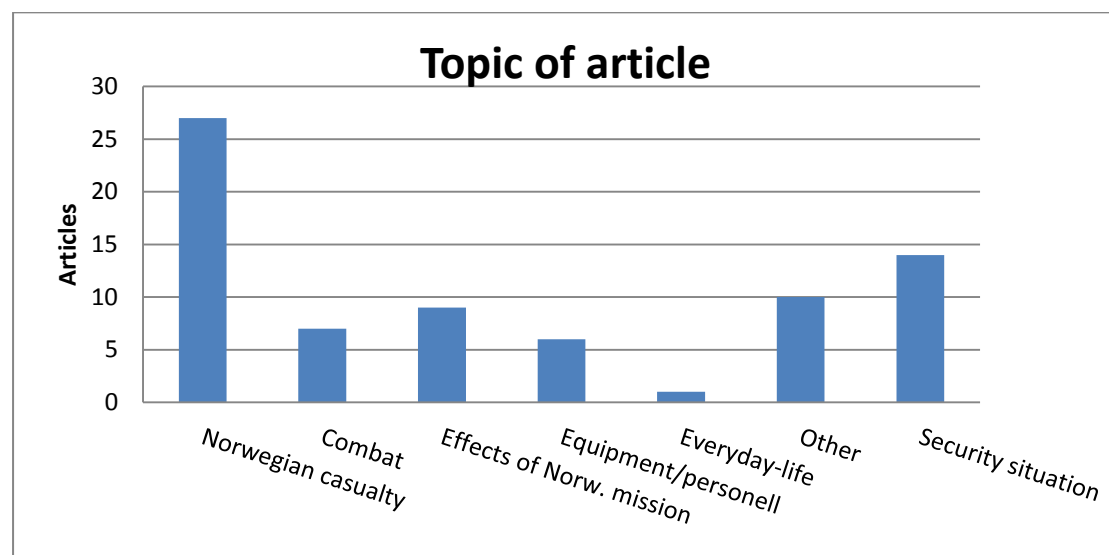
When taking into account the high frequency of reportages, it is interesting to observe that it was produced only 21 news articles. Critical perspectives are arguably presented more often in news articles than in the “softer” reportages



and features. Elisabeth Eide explains that the topics addressed in a reportage “in general have more positive connotations, and are more exploratory” (Eide 2005:248). Thus, the high salience of the genre reportage is in line with the frames employed. Another finding is that the population consists of only three feature stories. A feature will ideally require more time and sources than other genres.

#### 5.1.5 Topic of article

The attention given to the four Norwegian casualties in the media coverage is evident when analysing the key topic of the individual article. Figure 5.5 shows that 27 of the articles had the four casualties as its key topic.



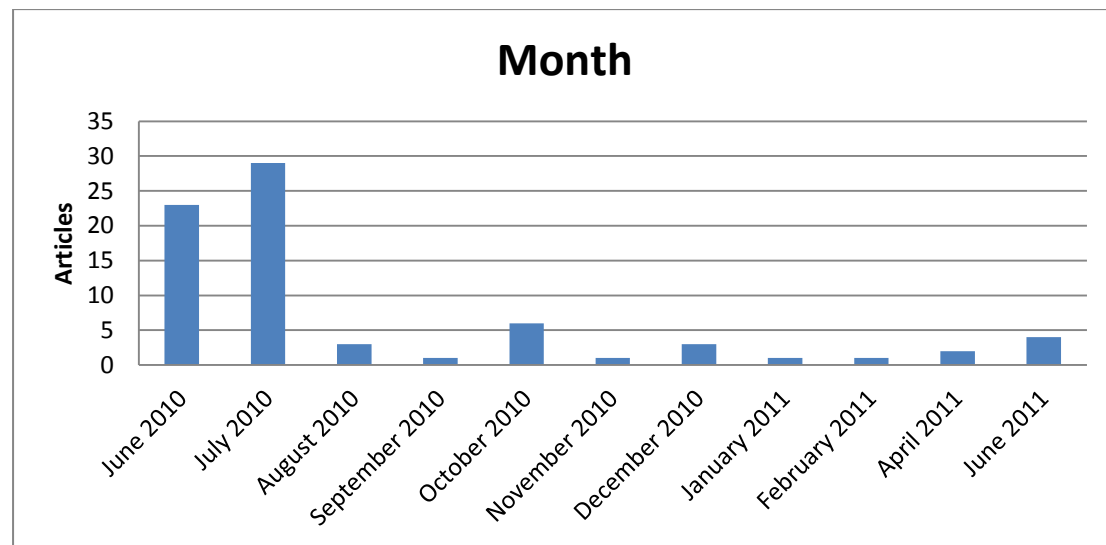
**Figure 5.5 Frequency of topics in articles (absolute value [N=74]).**

When the Norwegian casualties represent the key topic, the articles often address the combat action constituted by the road bomb that killed the four soldiers as well. However, the combat action itself, in that context, or in other articles, is seldom the key topic of the article. This is reflected in the statistics, which show that only seven articles had combat as its key topic. Additionally, despite the large impact the four casualties had on the media agenda, it can be observed that also other issues are communicated as key topics. First, the

security situation can be understood as a natural topic to emphasise in such a situation as Afghanistan. This is the key topic of 14 articles. Furthermore, the effect of the Norwegian mission is the key topic in 9 of the articles.

### 5.1.6 Month

As already stated, a majority of the articles in the population were produced in the aftermath of the four Norwegian casualties. The figure below shows how the 74 articles are distributed over time.



**Figure 5.6 Frequency of articles in different months (absolute value [N=74]).**

The figure illustrates the impact the four casualties had on the coverage of Afghanistan, with 52 articles written in June and July 2010. This may have influenced the results from the other variables, and must be taken into account when discussing the data. Moreover, figure 5.6 also illustrates that the frequency of articles in the rest of the period is limited, but relatively consistent.<sup>22</sup>

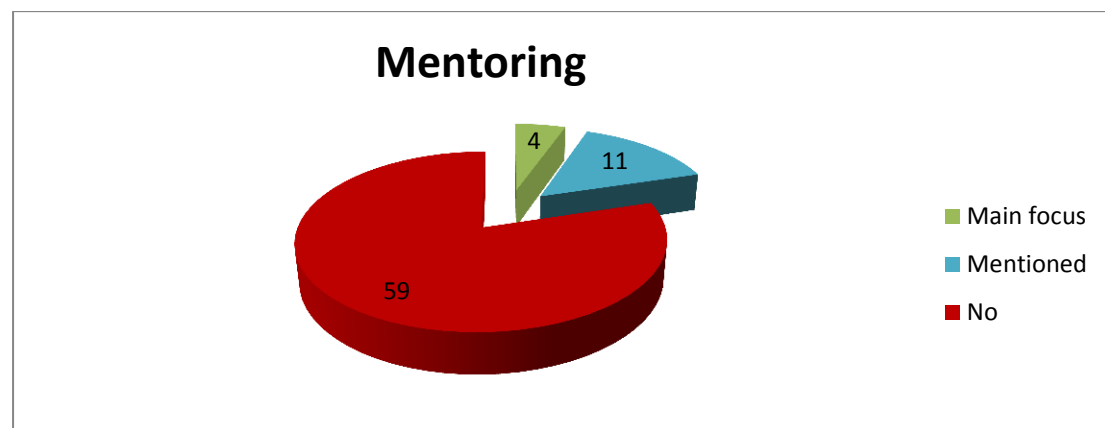
<sup>22</sup> A frequency table of how many articles the different newspapers produced is provided in appendix E

## ***B. The fulfilment of the communication strategy***

Now that the results of the variables addressing the general characteristics of the coverage have been presented, the results of the second group of variables, namely the ones deducted from the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces, can be described.

### ***5.1.7 Mentoring***

The first pie chart (figure 5.7) shows the salience of the mentoring and cooperation with Afghan security forces.



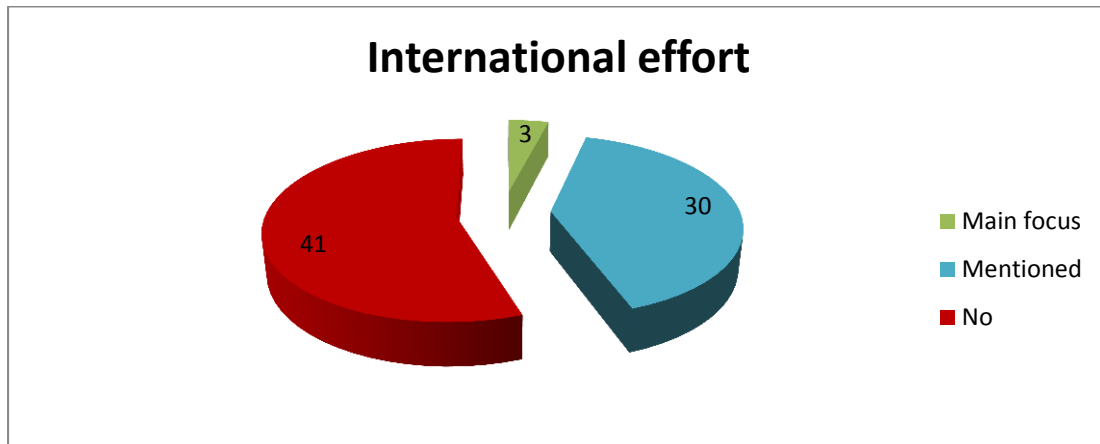
**Figure 5.7 Frequency of articles describing mentoring (absolute value [N=74]).**

Only 4 out of the 74 articles have this issue as its main focus, and as much as 59 articles do not address mentoring at all. Being one of the key military objectives of the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan, and an important goal in their communication strategy, this is arguably a disappointing result for the Norwegian Armed Forces.

### ***5.1.8 International effort***

Moving on to the goal of communicating the importance of a broad international effort, figure 5.8 shows that this issue is more prominent in the articles than the mentorship. Although only three articles employ the issue as

its main focus, it is mentioned in 30 of the articles. A total of 33 articles, close to half of the sample, touch upon the issue.

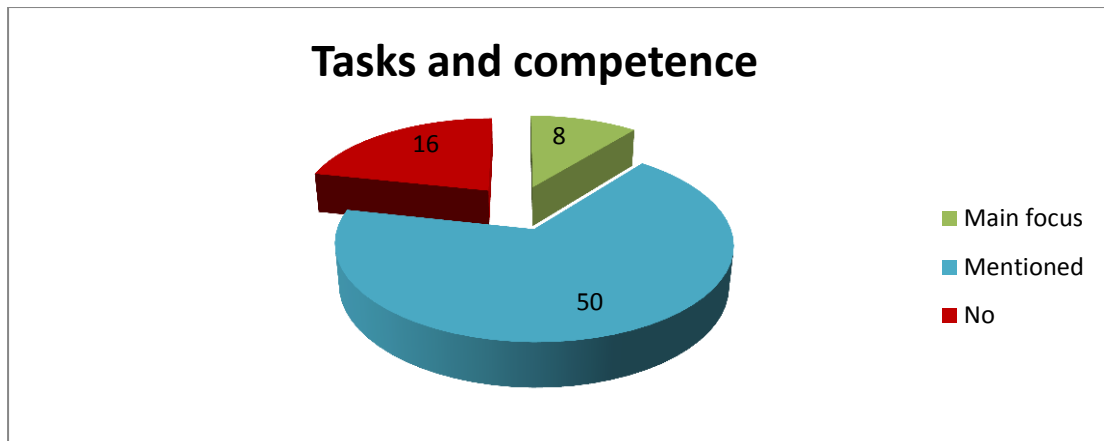


**Figure 5.8 Frequency of articles describing importance of international effort (absolute value [N=74]).**

Though it is still 41 articles that do not mention the role of NATO, the ISAF-forces, or the cooperation between the different nations operating in Afghanistan, the issue receives a fair amount of attention. The importance of the international effort is often portrayed through descriptions of how the different members of the alliance work together and support each other. The coverage fulfils this communication goal fairly well, but arguably not to the extent that should satisfy the Norwegian Armed Forces.

#### *5.1.9 Tasks and competence*

A communication goal that is fulfilled to a far greater extent, is the tasks and competence of the Norwegian Armed Forces. Figure 5.9 shows that the journalists who report from Afghanistan very often describe the skills of the soldiers, as well as their tasks and role in Afghanistan. It is an issue presented in 58 of the 74 articles, and is the main focus in 8 of them.

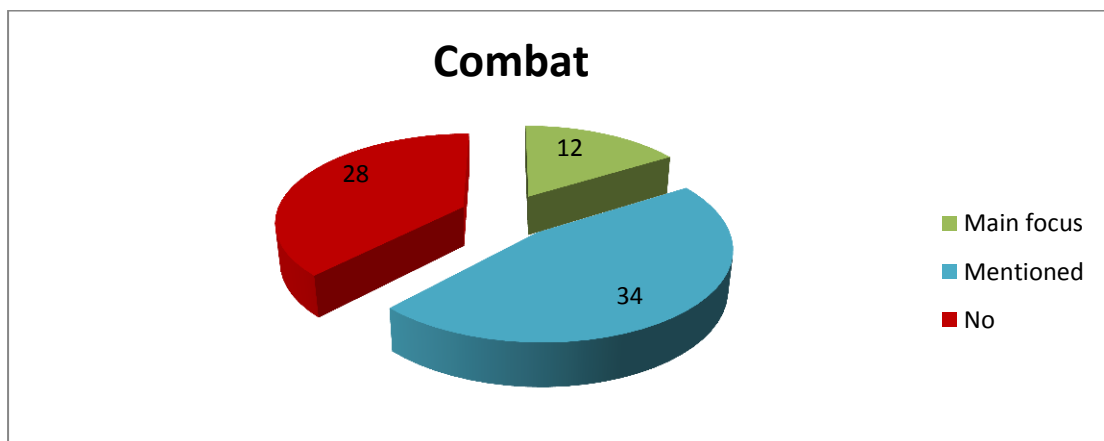


**Figure 5.9 Frequency of articles describing the tasks and competence of the Norwegian Armed Forces (absolute value [N=74]).**

This data can also be seen in light of the type of sources interviewed. As described in section 5.1.1, the analysis shows that military or police-sources are interviewed in almost 80 per cent of the population of articles. This characteristic is arguably reflected in the salience of the tasks and competence of the soldiers visualised in figure 5.10.

#### *5.1.10 Combat*

The last goal deducted from the communication strategy, is to downplay combat action.



**Figure 5.10 Frequency of articles describing combat (absolute value [N=74]).**

As the empirical data show, the Norwegian Armed Forces have not been successful in limiting the focus on combat action in the coverage. In total, 46 of

the articles describe Norwegian soldiers in combat. For 12 of these it is the main focus. This shows the high salience of combat action in the articles.<sup>23</sup>

## 5.2 Qualitative content analysis

Now that the results from the quantitative analysis have been presented, it will be valuable to address the results from the qualitative analysis of “Norge i krig – Oppdrag Afghanistan”. This will hopefully increase our understanding of the coverage produced when the journalists have been embedded with the Norwegian Armed Forces.

As described earlier, scholars usually divide texts into three types of discourses: a descriptive discourse, a story, or an argumentative discourse (Østbye et. al. 2002:71). In this perspective, “Norge i krig” is arguably a “story”. In line with the general characteristics of a “story” (Østbye et. al 2002:71) “Norge i krig” draws connections between different actors and elements, and describe a causal chain of events when telling the story about what the Norwegian troops do in Afghanistan. It focuses on subjects and shows “human interest” when portraying the three main characters: soldiers Sigve and Steve, and Rune Solberg, chief of the Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT 15). The documentary does not only cover their professional lives, it also portrays their personal features, such as families, religious beliefs and what they feel about their mission in Afghanistan.

Since the documentary can be understood as a “story”, it has been analysed through the actantial model developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas. The model, described in chapter 4.2, helps to identify what messages the documentary communicate, how they are communicated, and to what extent the goals in the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces are fulfilled. Furthermore, the model will serve as a structural framework when

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<sup>23</sup> Although 12 articles have been coded as having combat action as their main focus, only 7 articles were coded as having combat action as its key topic (figure 5.5). This discrepancy is a result of the differences between the two variables. Key topic reflects the one key issue presented in the article, whereas an article’s “main focus” reflects how salient an issue is throughout the article.

presenting the results of the qualitative analysis. In addition to the actants in Greimas' model, the concept of framing will be employed to help understand how the messages are being communicated.

### 5.2.1 *Object*

The overarching *object* communicated in all of the six episodes is that the Norwegian Armed Forces, through the mentoring of Afghan Security Forces, seek to create stability in Afghanistan, strengthen the security and increase the control of the Afghan forces. Only two minutes into the first episode, the importance of mentorship is emphasised by Rune Solberg: "Our most important mission is to help the Afghans so that they can make it on their own." Another illustrative example is when a text written by the filmmakers is presented to the audience in the second episode. It states: "The allied countries (ISAF) wish for the Afghans to take responsibility for their own security."

The documentary also shows the more specific tasks carried out by the Norwegian soldiers in order to meet the overall *objectives*, and the competence inherent in the Norwegian troops. In the third episode the *object* is to increase the security during the local elections. We follow the OMLT – the Norwegian mentoring-team – that contributes to the assistance of the Afghan police and the Afghan army. Major Christian Slinning states that "The mission of OMLT is to coach, teach and mentor." In the fourth episode, Rune Solberg describes the competence of the Norwegian soldiers to the journalist: "When it comes to planning, synchronising and coordinating operations, we can contribute a great deal."

Throughout the documentary, combat action is portrayed as a necessary means to fulfil the *objectives* of the Norwegian Armed Forces, but this receives a great deal of attention particularly from the fourth episode and onwards. Although the documentary to a large extent focuses on military aims, the fifth episode shows that Rune Solberg also tries to contribute to the development in Faryab. This perspective contributes to the image of Norwegian soldiers as helpful and compassionate.

The final episode in many ways captures the overarching *objective* of the Norwegian Armed Forces, and the problems they face. When seeking to establish contact between the Pashtun village Ghalbala and the provincial authorities, Rune Solberg and the Norwegian troops encourage the Afghan leaders to take charge of the security situation and development in Faryab. One scene shows a frustrated Solberg: “Now I was irritated. They are used to us fixing things for them, now they have to fix it themselves.” But Solberg also faces criticism from the elders in Ghalbala: “Foreign troops have given us promises for 7-8 years, but nothing has been done”, one says. On his last day in Meymaneh, Solberg tells the journalist about the prospects of fulfilling their objectives: “We will never manage to beat the Taliban. That’s my prediction.”

### 5.2.2 Recipient

The documentary presents the Afghanistan’s National Security Forces (ANSF) as the *recipient* of the Norwegian mission. As Solberg states in the first episode: “Of course we contribute to an improved Afghanistan.” There are only a few occasions where it is the Afghan people who constitute the *recipient*. An example of the latter is when Sigve explains that: “Our mission is to help the weak [...], and that is in line with Christianity I live by.” This contributes to the message that Norway is in Afghanistan to make Afghanistan a better place for the civilians.

The relationship between the Norwegian PRT and the Afghan forces is often communicated through one of two perspectives: either when co-operating in the battlefield, or when Rune Solberg has administrative meetings with his ISAF-colleagues and Afghan officials. But it is also shown through more specific tasks, such as building roads in the Pashtun-areas and the effort to secure the elections.

The fourth episode provides a very clear visual of who benefits from the Norwegian mission in Afghanistan. Christian Slinning, major in the mentoring unit OMLT, teaches the Afghan soldiers how to read maps and how to inform about their position. However, the Afghans occasionally also critique the



ISAF-mission for its lack of progress. Though the critique shows the negative features of the mission, it also communicates that Norway are in Afghanistan as a part of a larger coalition.

### 5.2.3 *Subject*

The *subject* in the documentary is the Norwegian Armed Forces represented by PRT 15. When the documentary follows the subjects Rune Solberg, Sigve and Steve closely, the tasks and competence of the Norwegian soldiers is efficiently communicated as well.

One example is the second episode, where Sigve states that “Our task is to be the manoeuvring element for the PRT, and that means supporting the Afghan security forces.” Other examples are when the Norwegian soldiers teach the Afghan soldiers how to read maps and coordinates, and when they secure road-bombs. Accompanied by thrilling music we see how the well-trained soldiers in a controlled manner trigger de road-bombs, thus making the roads of Faryab more secure.

Through the communication of PRT 15 as the *subject*, the audience is also introduced to the violent nature of their mission. One example of the focus on combat action in the documentary is when Norwegian soldiers have fired at the enemy. A soldier says: “I saw he was killed!”, and he and Sigve respond by laughing. Sigve explains to the camera: “We have sort of a cowboy-attitude as humour.”

### 5.2.4 *Helper*

With regards to the *helper*, an actant relevant when emphasising the importance of the broad international effort in Afghanistan, it is also communicated, but not as clearly as the other actants. The helpers of the Norwegian Armed forces are most often presented through administrative meetings with Rune Solberg and his ISAF-colleagues. One of the first insights given to the international coalition is when Rune Solberg has a sit-down with the chief of the American troops, and talks to the camera about the importance

of cooperating with the Americans. This relationship is emphasised throughout the documentary, and establish the Norwegian mission as a part of the broader, international ISAF-operation.

Another illustrative example is when the second episode informs that as much as 130.000 allied ISAF-forces are stationed in Afghanistan, and that only 500 of these are Norwegian. This communicates that the Norwegian Armed Forces are a small piece in a larger puzzle, and operate in Afghanistan as a result of the Western coalition.

### 5.2.5 *Enemy*

The Taliban represent the main *enemy* throughout the documentary: they try to sabotage the elections, they have established a stronghold in an Afghan village, and they are the main obstacle when the Norwegian soldiers try to reach out to the Pashtuns. Thus, the Taliban is communicated as the main obstacle to most of the tasks the Norwegian Armed Forces set out to accomplish. This contributes to the “enemy-image” of the Taliban established by the NATO in general, and U.S. in particular (Fondenenes 2011:22).

It is interesting to observe that the final episode shows the obstacle represented by the Afghan forces and the provincial authorities themselves. Their inability to take responsibility for their own missions is presented as a major cause to why Rune Solberg has enjoyed limited success in achieving his goals in Faryab. This is also the causal interpretation of several other situations.

### 5.2.6 *Sender*

The only actant in Greimas’ model not communicated clearly in the documentary is the *sender*. In the context of the Norwegian Armed Forces’ and ISAF’s mission in Afghanistan, the sender would arguably be the United Nations Security Council that through several resolutions have given them the mandate to carry out their mission. These resolutions constitute the justification for ISAF’s presence in Afghanistan, and it would be beneficial for the Norwegian Armed Forces if this had been communicated more clearly.

### 5.2.7 *Framing*

Having described the actants communicated in “Norge i krig”, an analysis of the framing of the documentary will indicate the tone and context in which the messages are communicated. One important factor in that respect is the intro played prior to each episode. The intro combines dramatic music with images of the attack on World Trade Centre. In between screams and dramatic music, we hear George Bush state “Freedom itself was attacked this morning and freedom will be defended”, in addition to his famous words: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” We see Barack Obama using the term “just war”, and Jens Stoltenberg telling Norwegian soldiers: “You have chosen to go out and defend the principals the society at home is based upon.” In doing so, the whole documentary is framed through the democratic justification of the war. An additional, but just as important effect is that the link between Norway’s mission and our western allies is firmly established.

The first four episodes are to a large extent presented in a positive frame, though the critical perspectives increase from episode to episode. It can be argued that the general frame employed, similar to the objective communicated, is that the Norwegian troops are in Afghanistan in order to stabilise and democratise the state, and help the Afghans help themselves. Thus, the frame provides a causal interpretation of what is happening. This “central organizing idea” contributes to fulfilling the goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces’ communication strategy.

Surprisingly, the documentary only briefly addresses the four Norwegian casualties. In a sequence lasting no more than ten minutes, an emotional Rune Solberg is portrayed. But the Norwegian Minister of Defence, Grete Faremo, is also quoted from her speech to the Norwegian soldiers, stating that: “They died so that we shall feel safe and secure.” Thus, the justification of the mission is communicated in the midst of the tragedy.

It is arguably not until the fifth and sixth episode that we see a clear critical frame, with the hopelessness of the situation in northern Afghanistan as the “central organizing idea”. Through familiar images of underdeveloped

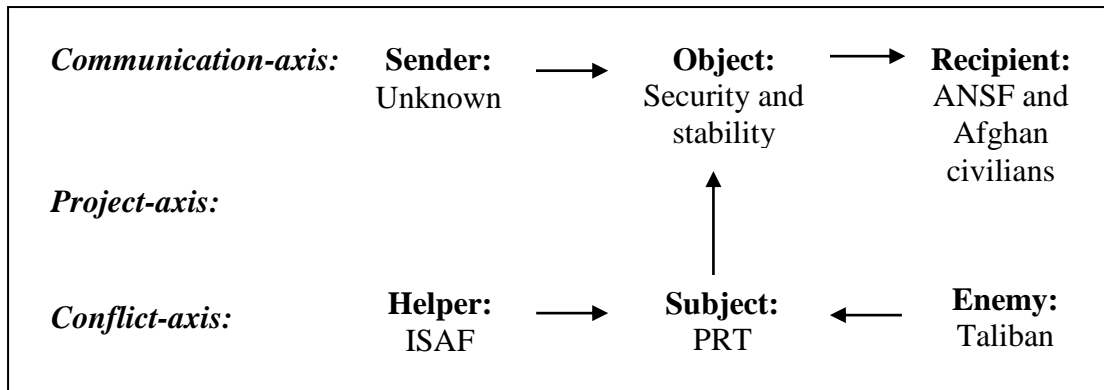
villages and poor civilians, and the expressed discontent by Norwegian soldiers, the audience understands the frustration and challenges the Norwegian Armed Forces face in Afghanistan. Rune Solberg shares his soldiers' frustration: "The army is too small to deliver a substantial contribution over time." The causal interpretation of the frame is that despite a heroic effort of the Norwegian Armed Forces, they have not succeeded in transferring control to Afghanistan's National Security Forces due to limited resources, and the problems emphasized earlier with the Afghan forces.

### **5.3 Summarising the quantitative and qualitative analysis**

The results from the quantitative analysis of the 74 articles show that both the number and disparity of sources is limited. There are also relatively few critical frames communicated, the coverage is dominated by the genre reportage, and there is a high frequency of articles having the four casualties as their key topic.

Looking at the four variables derived from the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces, the empirical data indicate that the success of the Norwegian Armed Forces in communicating their goals vary greatly. First, the tasks and competence of the troops is the communication goal fulfilled to the largest extent by the newspaper articles. However, a second finding is that the issue of mentoring the Afghan security forces is seldom included in the articles. Third, the importance of the international cooperation is communicated, but not to a large extent. Fourth, combat action is given a great deal of attention. Thus, it can be argued that the Norwegian Armed Forces have not been able to fulfil all of their communication goals through the 74 articles in large produced on media visits.

With regards to the NRK-documentary, analysed in light of Greimas' model, the following results can be observed:



### Model 5.1 Greimas' actantial model applied to "Norge i krig".

The qualitative content analysis has shown how the documentary, through the communication of these actants, fulfils all but one of the goals deducted from the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces – namely the intent to downplay combat action. Combat constitutes a highly dominant issue in the documentary. However, the mentoring of Afghan security forces, the tasks and competence of the soldiers, and how the Norwegian effort is both a result of and dependant on international alliances, are well communicated. Communication that is beneficial to the Norwegian Armed Forces is notably emphasised throughout the documentary by combining live images with written texts. The texts help the viewers interpret the images shown, which results in a positive synergetic effect for the Norwegian military.

Analysing the framing of the episodes, it can be argued that the first four episodes employ mainly positive or neutral frames with regards to the Norwegian mission. The last two episodes employ a more critical frame than the first four, but the failures of the Norwegian mission are often attributed to the shortcomings of the Afghan security forces. Another feature that arguably favours the image of Norwegian Armed Forces is the limited number and disparity of sources. Norwegian soldiers constitute the three main characters, and determine much of the discourse.

## 6.0 Discussion

The area of media and communication has been attributed an increasingly significant role with regards to warfare and the battle for public support. In the context of Afghanistan, the information domain has been given much attention due to the escalated sophistication of the Taliban's communication. As we recall, General McChrystal noted that ISAF needs to take "aggressive actions to win the important battle of perception" (McChrystal 2009:40). The Norwegian Armed Forces has met this challenge through developing a communication strategy directly applied to Afghanistan 2011. This thesis has set out to study Norwegian media's Afghanistan coverage, and to explore the extent to which the Norwegian Armed Forces have been successful in fulfilling the goals in their strategy when inviting journalists to Afghanistan.

According to the hypotheses, it was expected that the journalists leave behind central ethical norms of journalism such as a high number and disparity of sources, in addition to critical perspectives and free flow of information, when they join media visits or let themselves embed with the Norwegian Armed Forces. Despite this, it was still expected that the Norwegian Armed Forces would fail to downplay combat action and to communicate the more specific goal of mentoring Afghan forces. The third hypothesis states that the empirical findings show that one must open for a discussion of the established theories of media-state relations, and the extent to which they cover all relevant factors.

The thesis will now discuss the empirical data more thoroughly in order to address these three hypotheses, and answer the three research questions at hand.

### 6.1 What characterises the coverage?

The first research question this thesis seeks to answer is "What characterises the Norwegian media coverage produced on "media visits" or while

“embedded” in Afghanistan?”. In order to answer this question, the first groups of variables from the quantitative content analysis will be discussed in light of the theoretical framework of the thesis, together with relevant findings from the qualitative analysis and nuanced statements from the semi-structured interviews.

### *6.1.1 Type and number of sources*

From a theoretical perspective, The Norwegian Armed Forces represent the “news sources” in McCombs’ model. According to the model, the news source “provides the information for news stories” and will “at times” be successful in setting the agenda (McCombs 2004:117). As the empirical data show, the diversity of sources is limited in the coverage, and the Norwegian Armed Forces constitute a highly dominant voice. Representatives from the military and police are interviewed in close to 80 per cent of the articles, thus emphasizing the definitional power inherent in the Norwegian military. In the coverage analysed by Nordby (2009), where the sample included 399 Norwegian articles on Afghanistan, regardless of where the journalists were reporting from, the police and military were interviewed in less than 40 per cent of the articles. This indicates that the setting of media visits increases the prominence and potential influence of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source. Moreover, less than 5 per cent of the articles are based on political statements. This shows that the coverage is in congruence with the aim of the Norwegian Armed Forces to leave the political discussion to the politicians. Dagbladet’s journalist Einar Hagvaag explains why he thinks representatives of the Norwegian Armed Forces are so dominant in the coverage: “This shows what sources you have access to when you stay on the Norwegian bases. Military sources and politicians will dominate in a conflict such as Afghanistan. Though there are too few civilians interviewed, the fact that no members of Taliban are interviewed shows the challenges a reporter has with security”. The high salience of military sources can also be understood in light of the empirical data from Respons Analyse’s survey with 500 journalists.

When asked “how much faith do you have in military officers?”, 36 per cent of the respondents answered “fairly much” (Respons Analyse 2011). This can further help to explain why military- and police sources are given so much attention in the coverage.

The findings from the analysis of the NRK-documentary further support the data from the articles. Rune Solberg is by far the most central source, and the soldiers Sigve and Steve are also given much attention. The focus on military topics is strong, and the documentary includes few alternative perspectives such as the Taliban’s, the humanitarian situation, or the negative consequences of the Norwegian presence. NRK-journalist Marius Arnesen confirms that being embedded results in fewer perspectives and less diversity in their selection of sources: “Definitely. We have chosen one position from where we cover the conflict, namely the Norwegian Armed Forces and not the civilians. Ideally, we should have included both, but that is not possible when embedded.” This normative perspective is supported by the research conducted by Eivind Solberg-Hansen Fondenes. He analysed all the articles written on the four casualties in the following weeks after the attack, articles produced in both Norway and in Afghanistan (Fondenes 2011). Fondenes concludes that it is “evident that the critical coverage increases when a newspaper supplements with sources not representing the Norwegian Armed Forces or the Norwegian government” (Fondenes 2011:107).

The empirical data with regards to the type of sources employed support the potentially influential role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source inherent in McCombs’ model. Moreover, the empirical data confirm one of the features in Bennett’s indexing theory, namely that a prerequisite to, and a feature of, indexing is that it is the official source “who get the voice on the stories” (Bennett et. al. 2007:49 quoted in McQuail 2010:243).

The dominating role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source could enable the organisation to communicate all of their expressed goals in the communication strategy. However, according to McCombs’ model, there is a factor with even greater influence on the media agenda, namely the journalistic



norms and traditions. Bennett addresses ethical norms as well, but does arguably not attribute the same significance to them as McCombs. In the context of this study, the journalistic norms are closely connected to how the journalists relate to their sources.

It has already been argued that the diversity of sources is limited. Looking at a second perspective with regards to the ethical norms of journalism, namely the number of sources interviewed, the findings further strengthen the perception of the Norwegian Armed Forces as the prevailing source. The value with the highest frequency is two sources (21 articles). Furthermore, there are almost as many articles with only one source as there are articles with three sources (16 and 17 articles respectively). This indicates that the Norwegian Armed Forces are not only the most salient type of source, they are often the *only* source. Compared to the coverage analysed by Nordby (2009), we also see that the journalists interview less sources when they are embedded or on media visits. With regards to the documentary “Norge i krig” there are slightly more sources included than in the 74 articles. However, no more than two or three sources are given considerable attention in each episode.

VG-journalist Rune Thomas Ege is surprised when confronted with the statistics: “Ideally more sources should have been interviewed. One explanation is that a journalist often talks to many sources, but in the end it is a superior who makes the official statement.” This explanation is also supported by the Norwegian Armed Forces themselves. Of the 500 officers interviewed in the survey conducted by Respons Analyse (2011), only 5 per cent state that they answer questions from journalists themselves. Einar Hagvaag explains that the low number of sources could be a result of the setting in which the articles were produced: “When you are reporting on the four casualties, you don’t need as many sources as when you write a story trying to explain the complexity of the conflict.” Regardless of the different explanations to why there are so few sources, and why the sources often are military, these journalistic features go against paragraph 1.2 and 3.2 in “Vær varsom-

plakaten”, which state that “the press has a particular responsibility to ensure that different views are communicated” and that according to the ethical norms of journalism, one should “strive to achieve a broad and relevant selection of sources”.

A third perspective with regards to the ethical norms of journalism and the role of the sources involves the constraints practiced by the Norwegian Armed Forces when journalists visit them in Afghanistan. As we recall from chapter 2.2.3, the interviewees have different perceptions regarding their degree of freedom on media visits, but Petter Lindqvist is clear with regards to the fact that constraints are applied to classified information. This is also confirmed by the requirements in the ISAF-contract referred to earlier (ISAF 2011). Furthermore, Kristin Solberg argues that some of the soldiers are protected from the press, and that others “don’t tell the entire truth”. Anders Sømme Hammer goes much further when he states: “There is absolutely no free access.” When accepting such limitations, a journalist goes against principles expressed by his or her colleagues. When Respons Analyse asked 500 journalists what kind of constraints they would accept in a war zone, 38 per cent answered that they would accept no constraints (Respons Analyse 2011). Moreover, the limitations are in conflict with paragraph 1.3 in “Vær varsom-plakaten”: “The press can’t give into pressure from anyone who seeks to hinder an open debate, free flow of information or free access to sources”.

A fourth ethical perspective in journalism is the nature of the relationship that evolves between journalists and their sources. In April 2011, I interviewed Steve about the premiere of “Norge i krig” for an article in Dagbladet. Steve told me that: “The journalist became our buddy. It’s a bit scary, but he became one of the guys” (Steve quoted in Dagbladet, April 2. 2011). Keeping in mind that the documentary seldom focus on controversial issues, and spend only ten minutes on the Norwegian casualties, one could argue that the close relationship described by Steve is reflected in a reduction of critical perspectives in the documentary. However, Marius Arnesen, one of

the journalists following Steve, has a somewhat different understanding of the relationship:

I would not describe it as a friendship, but as a professional acquaintance and a relationship based on trust. We got so close that we could confide in each other, but it was never on the expense of my independence. I had to balance between being a journalist and ‘one of the guys’, and I had to focus more on that balance the longer time I spent with the soldiers. But I never crossed the line. It did not make it more difficult to ask critical questions, and I think we communicated the criticism the soldiers directed upward in the system. When you meet a group as tight as these guys, it is not easy to get close. You have to be a part of the group, so I joined them in their training and in the bar for a coke. At that point I reduced my role as a journalist, and they opened up.

Anders Sømme Hammer has not been embedded with the Norwegian Armed Forces, but with American, Canadian and Dutch troops. Without having seen “Norge i krig”, he is more critical towards embedding because of the relationship that develops between the journalists and their sources:

When you live with the soldiers, it does something to you. You get used to analyse the conflict from the soldiers’ perspective. In stead of challenging the soldiers, there is a big chance you describe their lives and adopt their perspectives and analysis without resistance. That should not be the main perspective. Of what I have seen so far, the majority of stories produced by embedded journalists are in line with the intentions of the Norwegian Armed Forces. The journalists show an obvious sympathy for the soldiers, share their perspectives and ask few critical questions.

Although Arnesen states that he never crossed the line between being a friend and being a journalist, it is interesting to observe that Steve experienced it differently. Moreover, it is problematic that relations that potentially could compromise the independence of the journalist arise.

With regards to media visits, most of the interviewees note that when the journalists travel on brief trips there is not enough time for a close bond between the soldiers and the journalists to develop. If the journalist lives in the camp for a week or two however, the situation is arguably different. Einar

Hagvaag explains that as a journalist “you relate to the soldiers in another way after some weeks”.

The already dominant position of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source becomes even stronger when seeking explanations to why the journalists choose to visit the Norwegian military in Afghanistan. One explanation given by many of the interviewees is the security situation. According to them, it is far too dangerous to travel independently in the northern Afghanistan where the Norwegian soldiers operate. In plain words, Norwegian journalists to a large extent depend on embedding and media visits in order to cover the war. Most of the interviewees also state that the Norwegian journalists are *too* dependent on the facilitation provided by the Norwegian Armed Forces. “Because of the security situation, we are very dependent on such trips. From a journalistic perspective, we are too dependent”, Einar Hagvaag states. Marius Arnesen is disappointed with Norwegian newsrooms: “To me it’s a mystery that there are not more media outlets with a designated correspondent down there.” The journalists’ dependence on the Norwegian Armed Forces becomes even more problematic when 62 per cent of the military personnel interviewed answer that they regard journalists as “easily influenced”.

The dependence on the Norwegian Armed Forces, together with the potential close relationships that develop between the journalists and the soldiers, are arguably in conflict with paragraph 2.2 in “Vær varsom-plakaten”, which states the reporters “must protect their integrity and credibility to be able to act free and independent in relation with individuals or groups [...]”.

The empirical data discussed in this section confirms the “reliance on government, elites and experts”, as described by Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model (2002:2). Furthermore, the reliance on these sources may indicate that the strong position of the military sources as “authorised knowers” increase due to limited knowledge on military issues in the newsrooms (Allern 1997:208; Schiager 2011:14). This is also emphasised by Petter Lindqvist who

state that a lack of knowledge regarding warfare and the Norwegian Armed Forces results in “less qualified questions”.

### *6.1.2 Framing*

An important characteristic in the analysis of how the Norwegian Armed Forces are portrayed in the coverage is the framing of the news items. As we recall, the analysis has focused on the tone of the frames employed. While Petter Lindqvist, and thus the Norwegian Armed Forces, claims that their main concern is to communicate the reality on the ground and that “critical journalism is characterised by qualified questions”, it is not a bold statement to argue that they would prefer a mainly neutral or positive coverage. The data from the qualitative content analysis show that only 18 out of the 74 articles employ a critical frame, and that the majority of the articles employ either a neutral or positive frame. VG-reporter Rune Thomas Ege argues that the coverage conducted at home normally would include more critical voices: “But the quality of the journalism does not necessarily improve just by including criticism”, he claims. Ege also states that the empirical data have to be understood in light of the four Norwegian casualties: “There is a time for everything. It is natural that it was not more critical frames in the immediate aftermath of the killed soldiers.” This explanation is in line with Fondenes’ analysis of all the articles written on the four casualties in the subsequent weeks (Fondenes 2011). Fondenes found that despite a broad coverage of the incident, there are very few articles on the war in general, and Norway’s role in particular, and that the drama and individual stories were the prioritised topics (Fondenes 2011:57). Also, the Norwegian casualties were, opposed to the civilian victims, largely presented as “worthy victims” (Fondenes 2011:110). The lack of stories putting the Norwegian effort in a larger, and potentially more critical perspective, shows that the media reflects the official “story line” of the Norwegian Armed Forces, especially with regards to decisive issues such as Norwegian casualties. This is in line with Bennett’s notion of indexing.

Looking at the documentary “Norge i krig”, the thesis has argued that only two out of the six episodes employ a clearly critical frame. Marius Arnesen agrees to only parts of the analysis: “I agree that the framing is somewhat skewed. But I don’t agree that four of the episodes are mainly positive. Also you have to take into account how a documentary is produced. You need to build anticipation and describe characters.” Arnesen also explains why they did not include more than 10 minutes on the four Norwegian casualties in the documentary. “First of all, we were not in Meymaneh when it happened. Second, we feel that the sequence told the story quite well. Maybe we could have used the situation to be more critical, maybe not. But we asked many critical questions, such as ‘is it worth it?’”. Having experienced embedding himself, Anders Sømme Hammer describes some of the mechanisms operating when embedded: “The military seeks to create understanding for the soldiers. They do not try to promote critical journalism. And that is not their job. It is the responsibility of the journalist and his or her editor.” Linking this statement to the notion of indexing, what Sømme Hammer arguably is saying is that when the media exclude critical perspectives and index the coverage in terms of the message sent from the sources, it contributes to create understanding amongst the population for the Norwegian Armed Forces. This is exactly the Norwegian Armed Forces seek to achieve.

Drawing upon the extensive selection of data collected from the analyses and interviews, it can be argued that media visits and embedding promote positive frames in the media agenda communicated, frames that are beneficial to the Norwegian Armed Forces. Moreover, we have seen examples of frames that have been more or less copied from the frames employed by the official sources. One example is the introduction of “Norge i krig” which frames the Norwegian mission through the democratic justification of the war, and thus sets the tone for the whole documentary. Examples from the articles analysed include stories that frame the mentoring of Afghan forces as Norway’s exit strategy. As we recall, this is very similar to what Grete Faremo

has stated: “The goal is that in the in the spring of 2011, the Afghans will take on the responsibility of the first provinces” (Faremo January 2011).

Furthermore, it is interesting to investigate the division communicated in the documentary between the “subject” represented by the Norwegian Armed Forces, and the “recipient” constituted by the Afghan security forces and civilians. This “we-they”-dichotomy corresponds with what Elisabeth Eide (2002) found in her analyses of the representation of India and Indians in *A-magasinet*. Eide argues that the “Norwegian or western helper” is represented “both as a ‘hero’ and as the most authoritative source regarding information of the lives of the Other” (Eide 2002:331). The quantitative findings of this thesis with regards to both the dominant role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source and how they are framed in the articles further support Eide’s argument.

Based on the empirical data discussed above, it can be argued that the Norwegian Armed Forces should be content with the framing of the coverage from Afghanistan, and that these frames help to communicate a favourable media agenda to the public. When taking into account that 61 per cent out of 500 journalists state that they find the media’s coverage of Afghanistan too little critical (Respons Analyse 2011), it further strengthens the argument.

Finally, the tone of the framing is also interesting with regards to the ethical norms of journalism. Paragraph 1.2 in “Vær varsom-plakaten” states that: “The press maintains important tasks such as information, debate and a critical perspective on society.” When only 18 out of the 74 articles, and 2 out of the 6 episodes, employ a critical frame, the coverage cannot be characterised as particularly critical. Thus we see that the overall coverage has a positive or neutral tone, and it can be inferred that paragraph 1.2 in “Vær varsom-plakaten” is not sufficiently adhered to.

### *6.1.3 Genre and topic*

The results of the variables genre and topic are also interesting with regards to the characteristics of the coverage because they provide insight to both the issues addressed by the media – and in what structure those issues are

presented. The empirical data show that there are relatively few “news articles” present in the sample compared to the genre “reportage”. Taking into account that most of the journalists who travel to Afghanistan are news reporters, one could expect to see more articles reporting on hard news. Moreover, the reportage in general has a more “positive connotation” (Eide 2005:248), and the high frequency of this genre is thus in line with the positive and neutral framings discussed above. These features strengthen the argument that it is the Norwegian Armed Forces who set much of the agenda on such trips, and that the access to relevant sources of news is limited. Moreover, the low frequency of feature stories indicates that the reporters have limited access to sources over a longer period of time. Another interesting finding is that only three out of the 74 articles are commentaries. This is relevant because it indicates that very few of the journalists who visit the Norwegian military bases actually use their personal experiences to reflect upon Norway’s mission in Afghanistan. Such a genre is useful in situations where there are no sources willing to present critical perspectives since it allows the journalists to nuance the communication themselves. In the context of Afghanistan, this could have constituted a highly valuable compensation for the strong focus on the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source. A nuancing factor with regards to this finding is presented by Einar Hagvaag, Dagbladet’s reporter. Hagvaag explains that he has written many commentaries and background stories based on his experiences in Afghanistan, but that these have been published later and in a different setting than the 74 articles.

Relevant to McCombs’ model of media agenda-setting and Bennett’s concept of indexing are also the topics presented in the articles, which relates to “what gets into the news”. The quantitative content analysis shows that 27 out of the 74 articles have the four Norwegian casualties as its key topic. Thus, it is the topic with the highest frequency in the sample. This indicates that when Norwegian soldiers are killed, the event will dominate the media agenda to a large extent, often at the expense of other perspectives. However, when considering that as much as 52 of the articles were written in the first two months



after the tragic event, one could have expected that the four casualties would constitute the key topic in more than one third of the entire sample. This shows that though the event had a large impact on the coverage, one should be careful with overemphasising its effect on other variables.

With regards to the other issues communicated in the coverage, it can be observed that the security situation, the equipment and personnel of the Norwegian Armed Forces and the effects of their mission are given much attention both in the news articles as well as in the documentary. These are important topics for the Norwegian Armed Forces, because it helps them to communicate the significance of sufficient resources, the security situation in which the soldiers operate and what they seek to achieve in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the topic “other” has a frequency of 10 articles. Included in that value are articles addressing the humanitarian perspective and other issues not directly related to the military perspective. The low frequency of this value illustrates that the coverage to a very limited extent address issues not linked to the military aspects of Norway’s presence in Afghanistan. For the documentary, slightly more humanitarian perspectives are included, but the focus on military objectives is still stronger. This indicates once again that the media agenda reflects the story lines of the Norwegian Armed Forces.

#### *6.1.4 Summarising the characteristics of the coverage*

Based on the characteristics of the media agenda analysed in the quantitative analysis, it has been argued that several of the ethical norms of journalism are left behind when Norwegian journalists visit the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. This is further supported by the qualitative analysis and answers from the semi-structured interviews. These findings confirm the first hypothesis of this thesis: “In the artificial “culture” of media visits and embedding, the characteristics of the media coverage will show that Norwegian journalists leave behind central ethical norms of journalism such as the number and diversity of sources, critical perspectives and free flow of information.”

In addition, it can be argued that the “diversity of sources”, “range of viewpoints” and “what gets into the news” to a large extent reflect the “story lines” of the Norwegian Armed Forces. This is in line with Bennett’s concept of indexing, and McCombs’ notion of influential sources. According to McCombs’ model, the journalistic norms are supposed to filter the communication of the source. The discussion provided above has arguably shown that the media to a large extent neglect those norms. Combining this feature with the dominant role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source, the Norwegian Armed Forces should be able to communicate their messages. This brings the discussion over to the second research question, namely: “To what extent does the media coverage fulfil the expressed goals of the Norwegian Armed Forces’ communication strategy?”

## **6.2 Is the communication strategy fulfilled?**

This section will seek to answer the second research question. In order to do so, the thesis has deducted four goals from the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces. As we recall, the organisation stresses the importance of communicating the mentoring of Afghan security forces, and that the Norwegian Armed Forces are in Afghanistan as a part of a larger international alliance. Moreover, the strategy states that the tasks and competence of the Norwegian soldiers must be communicated. Lastly, it emphasises the need to downplay combat actions. The extent to which these four goals are fulfilled through the media coverage analysed, will be discussed individually.

### *6.2.1 Mentoring the Afghan security forces*

The statistics from the quantitative content analysis show that the media agenda in the 74 articles does not fulfil the goal of communicating the mentorship of Afghan security forces. As much as 59 out of the 74 articles do not mention the issue at all, and only 4 articles have it as their main focus. Aftenposten’s Kristin Solberg informs that when she has been in contact with the Norwegian

Armed Forces, “they have been concerned with emphasising the cooperation with Afghan and international forces. [...] But I don’t know how well this has been communicated in Norwegian media.” And as we have seen, Solbergs’ scepticism is confirmed by the empirical data from the quantitative content analysis.

However, the goal is met to a much larger extent in the documentary. Marius Arnesen agrees that mentoring constitutes an important part of the documentary:

The large focus on mentoring is based on reality. It was a huge focus from the Norwegian Armed Forces that the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police must be a part of every mission. This also caused a lot of frustration among the soldiers. As shown in the documentary, they ask themselves, ‘why can’t we just do it ourselves and get the job done?’ But Rune Solberg was adamant that the Afghans had to do the job. We did not move one foot without the Afghans, so the focus on mentoring in the documentary could actually have been even greater.

For the NRK-team, it was also a conscious choice to put so much emphasis on the mentoring of Afghan forces, explains Arnesen: “This is a part of ISAF’s exit-strategy in Afghanistan, and something the Norwegian Armed Forces focus a great deal on.”

It is evident that the media agenda presented in the articles differs greatly from the documentary with regards to mentoring. How can this be explained? As we recall, 73 out of the 74 articles were produced by journalists on media visits, whereas the documentary was produced by embedded journalists. According to the theory, a possible explanation to these findings could be that the ethical norms of journalism are to a larger extent adhered to when the journalists are on media visits than when they are embedded. However, the analysis of the 74 articles, in which all but one article was produced on media visits, shows that also the articles employ few sources with limited disparity. There are journalistic constraints with regards to media visits

as well, and neutral and positive frames outnumber the critical frames. Thus, one needs to look at other factors.

Arnesen points to an interesting feature when explaining why he chose to focus on mentoring: “it is the reality”. The challenge for the Norwegian Armed Forces is arguably that this “reality” is only shown to the journalists who join the soldiers in combat. In order to join them in combat, the journalists have to be embedded. For the journalists who join the media visits however, they only get to interview the Norwegian soldiers before they leave for a mission, and when they come back. Thus, the cooperation with Afghan forces is not shown to the journalists to the same extent. The soldiers may talk about it, but the journalists get no first-hand experience, and have no footage of the cooperation. Thus, the nature of the media visit as a tool of communication could constitute an important cause to why mentoring receives such limited attention in the articles.

However, it is important to take into account a nuancing factor with regards to the articles. Much of the focus in the articles is directed at the four Norwegian casualties, thus making a “narrow” perspective, such as the Norwegian mentorship, less communicated. It can be argued that if the Norwegian Armed Forces had not actively set out to communicate this issue, it had not been covered at all. In that perspective, the total of 15 articles that either mention the mentorship, or has it as its main focus, is not a terrible result for the Norwegian Armed Forces. Having commented this, it can still be argued that the communication goal is not fulfilled by the articles analysed, and that the media agenda communicated in the articles on this issue does not reflect the dominant role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source.

### *6.2.2 The importance of a broad international effort*

The second aim of the Norwegian Armed Forces is to communicate the importance of a broad international effort with regards to Norway’s mission in Afghanistan. Based on the empirical data presented, it can be argued that they have been partially successful in communicating this issue. It is described in

almost half of the 74 articles. However, it is the main focus in only three articles. As described when the results were presented, the issue is often communicated through descriptions of how the different members of the alliance work together and support each other. Such descriptions are useful and factual pieces of information, and may be included to provide depth to an article. This may explain why it is mentioned fairly often in the articles, but seldom the main focus. Another explanation to why the issue is not given more attention in the articles is that the Norwegian Armed Forces do not communicate it clearly enough. Rune Thomas Ege has been in Afghanistan both as a journalist and press officer, and is surprised to see that this is a stated goal within the Norwegian Armed Forces: “I have never heard much about the ‘alliance argument’ from the Armed Forces. From the politicians, yes. From the army, no. The cooperation with other ISAF countries is also less emphasised by the Norwegian army compared to other allies.”

However, the issue is more prominent in the documentary, where many of the scenes portray Rune Solberg cooperating with his allied colleagues. Arnesen explains why he thinks this is so strongly communicated in “Norge i krig”: “We got the opportunity to show a side of the Norwegian Armed Forces I did not know we had. They are competent soldiers with individual skills who work closely with the Americans and the Afghan security forces [...]” Once again, we see that it may be the method of embedding that increases the focus on an issue the Norwegian Armed Forces seek to communicate.

Although the qualitative analysis shows that the international effort receives much more focus in the documentary, both the empirical data from the quantitative analysis, and the critical statements regarding the communication made by the Norwegian Armed Forces, indicate that the organisation has not been sufficiently active in their communication of this issue. Moreover, because the communication goal is only fulfilled to some extent, the dominant role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a news source is only partially reflected in the media agenda on this issue.

### *6.2.3 Tasks and competence of the Norwegian Armed Forces*

The third goal of the Norwegian Armed Forces is to promote the tasks and competence of the Norwegian troops. According to the statistics from the 74 articles, this issue is highly salient in the media agenda presented. Being the main focus in 8 articles, and mentioned in 50, the goal is well fulfilled through the coverage. One explanation to why it is given so much attention can be the emphasis the Norwegian Armed Forces put on the issue. Kristin Solberg confirms that the tasks and competence are “much communicated” by the Norwegian Armed Forces. Another explanation can be that the journalists are surprised by the competence they meet in Afghanistan. Rune Thomas Ege states that:

I think the tasks and competence is well communicated through the media. Many of the journalists visiting the Norwegian bases in Afghanistan for the first time have an image of the soldiers as ‘rookies’. But when they arrive at the bases, they see that the soldiers are skilled, young men with experience.

As quoted in the discussion on the communication of the international effort, Marius Arnesen was one of the journalists who were impressed by what they saw: “We got the opportunity to show a side of the Norwegian Armed Forces I did not know we had.”

With regards to the focus on the tasks and competence of the soldiers in the documentary, it is once again even greater than in the articles. As we remember, a scene in the first episode zooms in on Rune Solberg’s slide that states: “PRT are very well prepared. PRT are ready to take over the responsibility in Afghanistan!”. The audience is on several occasions reminded of the lack of competence within the Afghan security forces, and how the Norwegians can assist them in planning missions, reading coordinates and executing operations.

Thus, and in sum, it can be argued that the coverage fulfils this goal of the communication strategy, indicating that the dominant role of the news source is reflected in the media agenda communicated.

#### *6.2.4 Downplay combat action*

Finally, the Norwegian Armed Forces state in their communication strategy that too much focus on combat action can “counteract the goals of the ISAF-operation”. Based on the analysis of the 74 articles and the documentary, it can be concluded that combat action constitutes a substantial part of the media agenda presented from Afghanistan. It is the main focus in 12 of the 74 articles, and mentioned in 34 of them. Moreover, combat action receives considerable attention in the documentary.

Evidently, the Norwegian Armed forces have not been successful in downplaying combat action. The finding, however, is not surprising. First, it can be argued that the four Norwegian casualties resulted in a strong focus on the combat the soldiers were involved in. Yet, there is another feature that may be even more suitable in explaining the emphasis on combat action. Rune Thomas Ege explains: “Avoiding focus on combat is a lost case. Every journalist will ask about combat.” Thus, it is a matter of principle, and it can be argued that combat action is an issue where the news norms in fact are present. Combat is such an important and controversial issue that the Norwegian journalists are adamant about reporting on it. This is further confirmed by Einar Hagvaag. He argues that the topic is given so much focus because combat is a controversial issue in the Norwegian political debate, and “will always be reported on”.

Combat action is even more frequently communicated in the documentary where the journalists actually joined the Norwegian soldiers in combat. And interestingly, compared to the articles, this focus is not related to the four Norwegian casualties. As Sømme Hammer states: “Any journalist who becomes a witness to combat will report on that.” NRK-journalist Marius Arnesen also comments that combat is a natural thing to communicate when trying to tell the story about the Norwegian soldiers’ lives in Afghanistan. He sees the goal of downplaying combat as somewhat of a paradox:

They want to be more open, but also to tone down the communication of combat. I have a lot of sources in the army, and I know that combat action has increased significantly. Despite their stated goal of being more open, combat action is never communicated in press releases.

The empirical data show that even though the Norwegian Armed Forces try to tone down the focus on combat, they are not successful. They fail to move the attention of the journalists over to other topics, in order to limit the focus on combat in the media agenda. One could argue that the fascinating and dramatic nature of combat increases the journalists' interest in such issues. In support of this argument are findings revealing that media has a tendency to employ "violent" frames (McCombs 2004:113). Another potential explanation is that the focus on combat is a consequence of the four casualties. However, this does not apply to the documentary since it was produced both before and after the casualties and sets very little focus on the event. This leaves us with a third explanation, one that is supported by both the content analyses and the interviews: Despite the fact that the journalists leave behind some of their journalistic norms and ideals, this does not apply to such a controversial issue as Norwegian soldiers in combat.

#### *6.2.5 Summarising the fulfilment of the communication strategy*

The discussion above has argued that the intended messages of the Norwegian Armed Forces are reflected in the media agenda only to a certain extent. We have seen that in the 74 articles, the tasks and competence of the soldiers is highly salient. With regards to the Norwegian forces operating in Afghanistan as a part of a larger international effort, this is also communicated, though not as strongly. Combat is, in contrast to the expressed goal in the communication strategy, very much communicated in the articles. Mentoring of Afghan forces is on occasion communicated, but arguably not nearly as much as the Norwegian Armed Forces would have wanted. With regards to the documentary "Norge i krig", the communication goals are fulfilled to a larger extent. Mentoring is the key *object* in almost every episode, the tasks and



competence of the soldiers are clearly communicated, and the role of NATO and ISAF is more prominent than in the articles. The only goal not fulfilled is the downplaying of combat action.

Supplementing the findings from the quantitative content analysis with the qualitative analysis and the semi-structured interviews, we see that the empirical data in large confirm the second hypothesis: “When the journalists in large depend on official information, issues such as tasks, competence, and the role of the international effort are fulfilled by the coverage. However, the Norwegian Armed Forces fail to downplay combat action and fail to communicate the more specific goal of mentoring the Afghan forces.”

Although the hypothesis is confirmed on most issues, the strong focus on mentoring of Afghan forces in the documentary shows that the hypothesis is not fully fulfilled in the context of embedding. Another contradicting result is the limited focus on the international effort in the articles compared to the documentary. These nuancing findings will be addressed in chapter 6.3.

Based on the discussion of the coverage provided in this chapter, the nature of the communication strategy can now be addressed. Drawing upon Grunig’s notion of symmetrical and asymmetrical strategies, Schiager has argued that the Norwegian Armed Forces employ a two way asymmetric model (2011:92-93). The empirical data collected here indicate otherwise. First, it can be observed that the prevailing role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source results in a mainly unilateral communication, or “one way communication” to use Grunig’s term. Moreover, while the Norwegian Armed Forces benefit from the communication, the discussion has shown that the media benefit as well. The Norwegian journalists, to a large extent, depend on the Norwegian Armed Forces’ facilitation to actually witness the war in Afghanistan. Thus, it can be argued that the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces for Afghanistan 2011 is a one way symmetric strategy. However, the media benefit from the communication only if they manage to maintain the trust of the readers through critical reporting. Allern states that when the media accept information on the terms of the military

organisation, it will undermine the trust the audience have in the journalists' loyalty towards them (1997:218). Without that trust, the media jeopardize their position as a "watch dog" on behalf of the public. Such a situation is highly problematic for any newsroom, and is in conflict with "Vær varsom-plakaten" (Norsk Presseforbund 2005). Thus, it is crucial for the media to maintain a critical and independent perspective on the Norwegian Armed Forces when visiting their bases. The data presented here indicate that this is not always adhered to.

Related to the nature of the communication strategy, is the degree of openness within the Norwegian Armed Forces. It is a stated goal in the strategy to achieve the "greatest support possible for the Norwegian Armed Forces in the Norwegian public through as open, timely and honest information [...]" (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011). Based on the statements made by the interviewees discussed earlier in the thesis, it is evident that this openness is not always practiced. Petter Lindqvist confirms in the interview that the ideal of openness is not shared by everyone in the Norwegian Armed Forces:

Many of the decision-makers within the organisation have been here since the fall of the Berlin wall. As late as the 1990's we never informed about missions involving combat. A natural reaction is that the combat we experience today must be kept out of the media. This makes it difficult to be open about what we do.

The tendency to keep information within the organisation, combined with media's dependence on the arrangements offered by the Norwegian Armed Forces, will arguably increase the definitional power of the official sources. For the media, it will not be possible to cover something they have no knowledge about. Moreover, an increase in the definitional power should further strengthen the sources' potential to influence the media agenda as described by McCombs' model and Bennett's notion of indexing.

### **6.3 What are the implications for the media-state relation?**

The discussion provided so far has addressed the two empirical research questions of this thesis. The scope will now be widened to a more generic discussion that seeks to answer the third research question: “What do the empirical findings say about the media-state relation, and what are the theoretical implications for the academic debate?”.

Lance Bennett and Herman and Chomsky argue that the media produce “officialised news” when it comes to important issues such as foreign policy and warfare (Bennett 1994:23). This notion of media-state relations is widely supported by numerous seminal studies. Hallin’s research on the Vietnam War, together with a wide range of studies conducted on domestic and international conflicts, all show that reporters turn to official sources when covering a conflict (Bennett 1994:23-24). This is in line with Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model. Moreover, research indicates that the dominance of official sources “is even more pronounced in national security stories than for the news as a whole” (Bennett 1994:23). Looking at the Norwegian context in general, this argument is supported by how the press historically have complied with Norwegian security policies (Ottosen 2009; Thune et. al. 2006).

This thesis has drawn upon the theoretical framework provided by McCombs’ theory of media agenda-setting in order to increase our understanding of the media coverage and the relationship between the media and the Norwegian Armed Forces as an official source. In addition, Bennett’s theory of indexing has been employed to sophisticate the discussion. These are dominant theories with regards to media-state relations. McCombs argues that official sources have a significant impact on the media agenda communicated, but that news norms are even more influential and can filter some of the communication made by the source. According to Bennett’s notion of indexing, media tend to reflect the attitudes and story lines of governmental officials, or military leaders in the context of this thesis. Are these historically dominant notions reflected in the coverage produced in Afghanistan by Norwegian journalists? Only to a certain extent.

Yes, we see that in the setting of Afghanistan, Norwegian journalists depend heavily on official sources. The statistics from the variables regarding the number and type of sources indicate that it is the sources from the Norwegian Armed Forces who dominate the media agenda produced on both media visits and while embedded. Being the most dominant voice, the Norwegian Armed Forces are also given the opportunity to influence the content of the media agenda. This results in a coverage that may be labelled officialised news, because it is mainly the official stories that are communicated by the Norwegian media. This is also in line with the Norwegian tradition of a “consensus-oriented foreign policy” where the media adhere to the perceptions and arguments of the official sources (Thune et. al. 2006:211-212).

However, the discussion provided so far has also shown that the dominant role of the Norwegian Armed Forces as a source has not resulted in a media agenda as favourable to the organisation as expected by the theories applied. One of the most intriguing findings of this thesis is that the content seems to be indexed only on certain issues. What is written is largely a reflection of the official arguments, but some of the official perspectives are also left out of the coverage. This is interesting because it seems to unveil an inconsistency that arguably cannot be explained without further investigation. One example is how the 74 articles analysed do reflect the Norwegian Armed Forces’ “story line” of the tasks and competence of the soldiers, but at the same time neglects the “story line” of mentoring. Moreover, the articles are only to some extent indexed in terms of the importance of the broad international effort in Afghanistan, and neither the articles nor the documentary are indexed in terms of downplaying combat action.

Thus, we see that the well established concepts of Bennett and Herman and Chomsky are only partially confirmed by the coverage. The Norwegian Armed Forces are successful in some of its communication, and the coverage reflects many of their views, but they still fail on some crucial aspects. How can this be explained? One approach to finding an answer is looking to the

overarching theoretical framework of the thesis, namely McCombs' "onion" of media agenda-setting. According to McCombs' model, the news norms will have a larger impact on the media agenda than the news sources. The thesis has not set out to study causality, but following this line of argument the ethical norms of Norwegian journalists could be a potential explanation to why the Norwegian Armed Forces have not been successful in communicating all of their goals.

Looking at one of the big failures of the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication, namely the strong focus on combat action in the coverage, this may be explained by McCombs' "news norms"-factor. Though it could be argued that the focus on combat is a result of the four Norwegian casualties, this explanation fails when taking into account that the salience of combat action is even higher in the documentary produced independently of the four casualties, than in the articles. An explanation that fits both the articles and the documentary, and also emphasised by the interviewees, is the reluctance within the media to "cover up" combat. This indicates that when the real controversial issues are brought up, the ethical norms of journalism do kick in. Thus, we see that the ethical norms of journalism may have counteracted the Norwegian Armed Forces' communication of this issue. This is in line with McCombs' model, but the explanation arguably has consequences for the notion of indexing. The findings indicate that when the ethical norms of journalism are brought into play, the media do not reflect the "story line" of the official sources, and the indexing-hypothesis fails. Bennett do recognise the role of journalistic norms, but attributes limited influence to the ethical norms of journalism when arguing that oppositional perspectives are presented only when there is a debate within the official circles (Bennett 1994:24). The debate regarding the Norwegian mission in Afghanistan has been limited within the official circles, due to the broad consensus in parliament regarding the Norwegian effort (Ottosen 2009:37). Although a public debate emerged in the aftermath of the four Norwegian casualties (Fonden 2011), it was arguably not a dominant debate within the official circles. Thus, it can be argued that the

theory of indexing should attribute more importance to the potential influence of the ethical norms of journalism. This is an argument also supported by the U.S.-Libya case-study referred to in chapter 3.2.3 (Althaus et. al. 1996).

When looking beyond the context of combat action, however, the study has shown that many of the ethical norms of journalism – such as diversity of sources, critical approach, journalistic independence and free flow of information – are to a large extent left behind when journalists join media visits or let themselves embed. McCombs explains that the importance of news norms will vary from culture to culture. When it can be observed that the ethical norms of journalism are not generally adhered to in “the Norwegian culture” of being embedded or on media visits, it will on most issues be erroneous to assume that such norms will have a stronger influence on the media agenda, than the news source.

So, what factors can explain the Norwegian Armed Forces’ failure to communicate the importance of mentoring in the 74 articles? All but one of these articles was written by journalists on media visits. Looking at the documentary produced by embedded journalists, it fulfils the goal to a large extent. The discrepancy between the two samples can be a result of the fact that 57 of the articles were written in the immediate aftermath of the four casualties. But based on the analysis provided, the answers given by the interviewees, and the fact that the four Norwegian casualties constituted the key topic in “only” 27 out of the 74 articles, it can just as well be argued that it was the media visits, as a tool of communication, that played a decisive role in the failure of the Norwegian Armed Forces to communicate the mentorship. Solberg, Ege, Hammer and Hagvaag all agree that embedding is a more efficient tool for the Norwegian Armed Forces to employ in their communication than media visits. Petter Lindqvist concurs: “The coverage produced by embedded journalists fulfils the goals of our strategy to a larger extent, because the journalism is more thorough and goes deeper.” This factor could also explain the findings that went against the hypotheses, namely that the issue of mentoring was well communicated in the documentary made by embedded reporters, and that the

importance of a broad international effort was not communicated to a larger extent by the articles.

Furthermore, Rune Thomas Ege emphasises the lack of efficiency in the communication conducted by the Norwegian Armed Forces: "They should be more proactive in their communication from Afghanistan to Norway. That would benefit the Norwegian Armed Forces." Ege also argues that the army "depends too much on the individual press officers", have too few tools available, and are limited in their use of social media. This notion is strengthened by the responses to the survey conducted with 500 journalists. When asked to rate the availability of the Norwegian Armed Forces on a scale from 1 to 6, most of the journalists (39 per cent) gave them a score of 3 (Respons Analyse 2011).

Petter Lindqvist admits that the Norwegian Armed Forces need to improve their communication:

We have a long way to go before we can be satisfied with how our communication goals are fulfilled. [...] We must look at alternative tools of communication. We must to a larger extent make material from Afghanistan available to the journalists back home in Norway, and this must be on their terms. Among other things we are trying to give access to more audio-visual material from Afghanistan.

This aspect is also emphasised in the communication strategy, which states that: "Video and images from the theatre must be made available, as well as comments when requested" (Norwegian Armed Forces 2011).

Based on the empirical data, as well as the statements above, it can be argued that many of the problems facing the Norwegian Armed Forces in communicating their messages lie within the military itself. The organisation is not sufficiently efficient, precise and sophisticated in their communication on certain issues. This is particularly evident with regards to media visits as a tool of communication. While one should be cautious with generalising outside the context of this study, the empirical findings can provide some interesting perspectives to the theoretical debate regarding the media-state relationship.

It has already been argued that Bennett's theory of indexing should to a larger extent acknowledge the potential influence of the ethical norms of journalism. With regards to McCombs' model of media agenda-setting, it does not address the nature and quality of the communication made by the sources. Instead, McCombs include the norms and traditions of journalism as a nuancing factor when explaining the success or failure of a news source in communicating its message (McCombs 2004:105). The empirical data indicate that both the quality of communication *and* the news norms should be included when seeking to explain the process of how a media agenda is created. This arguably constitutes a shortcoming of McCombs' "onion" of media agenda-setting. Moreover, the argument that the quality of communication should be included as a factor is also supported by one of Bennett's assumptions referred to in chapter 3.2, which states that "the growing sophistication of press management techniques" will make some officials more successful than others in creating "favourable media framings" (Bennett 1994:29).

In sum, we see that the research results presented in the thesis confirms parts of McCombs' theory of media agenda-setting and parts of Bennett's theory of indexing. Yet, due to the fact that both of the theories have their shortcomings, their explanatory strength would arguably increase by drawing upon each other. This finding confirms the third hypothesis, which states that: "The empirical findings are expected to show that the media reflect the opinions of the sources only to a certain extent. Hence, it is necessary to open for a discussion of the established theories of media-state relations, and the extent to which they cover all relevant factors."

Based on the findings provided by this study, it is argued that in its layer of news sources, McCombs' onion should include a modifying factor related to the sophistication, quality and precision of the communication conducted by the source. Moreover, Bennett's theory of indexing should to a larger extent acknowledge the potential filter-effect inherent in the ethical norms of journalism.



## 7.0 Conclusion

The characteristics of the coverage analysed in this thesis have shown how the journalists leave behind several of the ethical norms of journalism when visiting the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. When comparing the media agenda to the messages the Norwegian Armed Forces seek to communicate, it has been argued that the agenda reflects or “index” much of the “story lines” of the Norwegian military. Yet, the Norwegian Armed Forces have not been successful in fulfilling all of their communication goals. These findings are in line with the two first hypotheses presented in the introduction.

In a more generic perspective, the analysis has shown that although the media agenda does communicate “officialised news” to the public, there are some nuancing factors present. While it was not the aim of this thesis to infer causality, it has been argued that the theories of McCombs and Bennett need revising in order to increase their explanatory power with regards to media-state relations. This is in line with the third hypothesis of the thesis. It has in particular been argued that McCombs’ “onion” of media agenda-setting would benefit from incorporating the quality of the communication made by the sources, as a factor.

An interesting finding from a Norwegian perspective is that it appears that the Norwegian Armed Forces’ communication strategy functions as a “one way symmetrical strategy”. But the media will only benefit from the relationship if they maintain the trust of their readers. If they wish to maintain that trust, they must uphold an independent and critical media agenda. The empirical data have shown that this is not always achieved in the reporting produced in Afghanistan today. Thus, the Norwegian media should increase their awareness of how they report.

For the Norwegian Armed Forces, the findings indicate that some of their failures of communication can be attributed to a lack of sophistication in tools and strategy. Thus, if they wish to increase their level of success, they

should to a larger extent employ embedding as a tool of communication. They may also utilise other platforms of communication, such as facilitating visual material from Afghanistan, and be more pro-active in promoting specific issues.

For future research, it will be possible to conduct a similar study as the one provided here, but with the latter part of 2011 included in the sample. This would be valuable because a larger sample could provide results with even greater prospects of generalisation. Furthermore, it would be interesting to study the audience effects of the media agenda analysed here, as well as the subsequent consequences for the Norwegian Armed Forces and the policies of the Norwegian government.

This being said, the thesis has provided new insight regarding the role of the ethical norms of journalism and the quality of communication when explaining the intricate process of media agenda-setting. Furthermore, it is the hope that this knowledge will be found valuable to the larger debate on media-state relations in the “theatre of war”.

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# Appendix

## **A Interview guide journalists**

### **General strategy**

1. What do you think are the most important goals in the communication strategy of the Norwegian Armed Forces for Afghanistan 2011?
2. In your opinion, what kind of tools do they employ to fulfil these goals?
3. In your opinion, to what extent are the Norwegian Armed Forces successful in fulfilling the goals?

### **“Media-visits”**

4. What are the aims of the Norwegian Armed Forces when inviting to media visits?
5. Who finances the trips?
6. What stories do you search for on media visits?
7. Are there any restrictions on media visits?
8. What kind of relationship do you get with the soldiers when you live with them?
9. To what extent do you think the coverage produced on media visits fulfils the goals of the communication strategy?

### **Embedding**

10. In your opinion, when did the Norwegian Armed Forces start embedding journalists?
11. How do you define being embedded?
12. What are the aims of the Norwegian Armed Forces when embedding journalists?
13. To what extent do you think the coverage produced on media visits fulfils the goals of the communication strategy?
14. Have you been embedded?

If yes:

15. Was it on tour initiative, or the initiative of the Norwegian Armed Forces?
16. Who financed the trip?
17. What stories do you search for when being embedded?
18. Are there any restrictions when embedded?
19. What kind of relationship do you get with the soldiers when you join them in combat?

### **General about trips with the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan**

20. To what extent are Norwegian journalists dependent on these trips to cover the war?
21. Do these visits affect the coverage in any way?
22. Are these kinds of trips on the expense of other perspectives and sources?
23. Do Norwegian newsrooms supplement such visits with independent trips to Afghanistan?
24. Are journalists as conscious with regards to the relationship to sources, disparity of sources and critical perspectives on such trips as in journalism in general?
25. What can Norwegian media do to improve their coverage of Afghanistan?

## **B Interview guide Norwegian Armed Forces**

### **General strategy**

1. Why do the Norwegian Armed Forces have a communication strategy?
2. What is the essence of the communication strategy?
3. How conscious is the Norwegian Armed Forces with regards to the strategy?
4. What do the Norwegian Armed Forces do to fulfil the goals of the strategy?
5. In your opinion, to what extent do you fulfil the goals?
6. Does the strategy have any negative consequences?
7. Does the strategy have a potential of improvement?

### **Media visits**

8. How long have Norwegian Armed Forces invited to media visits?

9. How do the Norwegian Armed Forces define media visits?
10. In your opinion, to what extent does the coverage produced on media visits fulfil the goals of the strategy?
11. What resources do the Norwegian Armed Forces invest in these visits?
12. What restrictions apply on media visits?
13. To what extent do Norwegian journalists depend on these visits to cover the war?

### **Embedding**

14. When did the Norwegian Armed Forces start embedding journalists?
15. How do the Norwegian Armed Forces define embedding?
16. In your opinion, to what extent does the coverage produced on while embedded fulfil the goals of the strategy?
17. What resources do the Norwegian Armed Forces invest in embedding?
18. Are the Norwegian Armed Forces satisfied with the tool?
19. What restrictions apply when embedded?

### **General about trips with the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan**

20. How would you describe the relationship between the Norwegian Armed Forces and the journalists on these visits?
21. Are you confronted with critical questions by journalists on these trips?
22. Do Norwegian newsrooms supplement such visits with independent trips?

### **Media's coverage**

23. What do the Norwegian Armed Forces think about the coverage?
24. To what extent do the coverage correlate with the coverage you seek?

## **C Interviewees**

**Rune Thomas Ege:** Reports for VG, and has been in Afghanistan on numerous trips as a journalist. Ege has also worked as a press officer in Afghanistan in 2008. I met Ege at his office, which allowed for a personal encounter lasting for more than an hour.

**Einar Hagvaag:** Experienced reporter in Dagbladet on foreign affairs. Hagvaag has for many years covered armed conflicts in Europe, Latin America, Middle East and in Asia. Hagvaag has also reported from Afghanistan independent of the Norwegian Armed Forces. Hagvaag was able to meet me in person, and the interview lasted for more than an hour.

**Kristin Solberg:** South Asia-correspondent for Aftenposten living in Kabul. Winner of the International Reporter-award at the “SKUP”-conference in 2011. Because Solberg lives in Kabul, I had to interview her on Skype. The internet connection in Kabul is not perfect, so we had some occasional problems with understanding each other. On those occasions I repeated the questions, and the problem was solved.

**Marius Arnesen:** Video-journalist for NRK. Arnesen was one of three journalists from NRK who was embedded with the Norwegian Armed Forces in the making of the documentary “Norge i krig”. I met Arnesen at his office, and the interview lasted for more than an hour.

**Anders Sømme Hammer:** Independent journalist living in Kabul. Sømme Hammer has worked for several Norwegian media outlets, such as NRK, Aftenposten and Dagbladet. Because Anders Sømme Hammer lives in Kabul, I had to interview him over the phone. The connection was good and we talked for over an hour.

**Petter Hallvard Foght Lindqvist:** Chief of communication at the Norwegian Joint Headquarters of the Norwegian Armed Forces. Petter Lindqvist travels a lot, and I chose to do the interview over the phone so that the progress of the thesis did not suffer. This turned out to be unproblematic, because he put everything aside, and devoted his attention to the interviews. Also, because I had more questions to him than to the journalists, the interview was longer. As a consequence, I interviewed him on three occasions.

## D Coding manual for the quantitative content analysis

Variable	Description
Type of sources	The type of sources will be analysed on the following values: 1) military or police, 2) politicians, 3) humanitarian representatives, 4) scholars, 5) civilians and 6) the Taliban or war-lords
Number of sources	The number of sources will be counted in each article. Anonymous sources will also be included, because though anonymous, they still constitute a view referred to in the article.
Framing	This variable has three values; 1) positive, 2) neutral, 3) critical. If the article is framed through a critical statement, it will be categorised as a “critical” frame. If the article addresses a problem within the Norwegian Armed Forces, or asks critical questions regarding the mission, its results or the behaviour of the soldiers, it is also critical. On the other hand, if the article focus on the positive effects of the Norwegian mission or similar, it will be coded as “positive”. If an article employs neither a positive or critical frame, or balances both perspectives, it will be coded as “neutral”.
Genre	The values for this variable are 1) news article, 2) interview, 3) reportage, 4) feature, 5) comment/background and 6) other. “News articles” present news regarding a certain topic, and focus on that issue. An “interview” is typically based on one personal interview, does not include other perspective than the ones presented by the interviewee, and the journalist does not provide any observations or impressions. A “reportage” can be defined as “a personal account based on the reporter’s own observations” (Bech-Karlsen 2002:147), connected to news and events. Closely related to the reportage is the “feature”. Feature is here understood as a genre that goes further than the reportage, where the journalist uses more of her own observations and “moves beyond the immediate event to

	provide the larger perspectives and stories” (Hvid 2002:83). Reportage and feature are coded as two different genres in order to deepen our understanding of how much time and resources are invested in the articles. “Comment/background” is here understood as a reflective piece where the journalist expresses her personal views on a topic.
Topic of article	<p>This variable address the one key topic presented by an article, and includes the values 1) effects of the Norwegian effort 2) combat actions, 3) casualties, 4) the everyday-life of the Norwegian soldiers 5) equipment and personnel 6) security-situation and 8) other.</p> <p>The value “effects of the Norwegian effort” includes both the positive and negative effects with regards to the security situation, the Afghan security forces, the civilians or similar. “Combat actions” and “casualties” are two separate variables because the casualties can be the main topic without addressing the combat-action to the same extent, and vice versa. The value “equipment and personnel” relates to articles addressing the resources of the Norwegian Armed Forces. “Everyday-life” includes stories from within the Norwegian bases that do not address the soldiers’ military tasks. The value “other” will include all other topics, such as the humanitarian situation.</p>
Month	The articles will be coded in terms of which month they were published.
Newspaper	The articles will be coded in terms of which newspaper they have been published in.
Mentoring	<p>The articles communicating the mentorship include those who either describe the mission of mentoring in specific, describe how the Norwegian and Afghan forces cooperate, or merely describe the effects of the mentoring. The variable will be measured on the values 1) no, 2) mentioned and 3) main focus, depending on the salience of the issue throughout the article.</p>

International effort	The articles communicating the importance of a broad international effort include those who address Norway's membership in NATO as a precondition for the mission in Afghanistan, describe the conflict as a NATO-mission or describe the cooperation with other ISAF-countries. The variable will be measured on the values 1) no, 2) mentioned and 3) main focus, depending on the salience of the issue throughout the article.
Tasks and competence	This variable measures if an article describes the daily tasks of the soldier, how the soldiers have trained to be prepared for the mission in Afghanistan, or the general competence inherent in PRT 15. The variable will be measured on the values 1) no, 2) mentioned and 3) main focus, depending on the salience of the issue throughout the article.
Combat	The articles will be measured on addressing combat-action as either 1) no, 2) mentioned and 3) main focus, depending on the salience of the issue throughout the article. If an article mentions the four casualties without referring to the actual combat action, it will not as "no". This will provide a more accurate picture of how many articles actually describe combat action.

## E Frequency tables.

**Number\_sources**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	2	2.7	2.7	2.7
1	16	21.6	21.6	24.3
2	21	28.4	28.4	52.7
3	17	23.0	23.0	75.7
4	7	9.5	9.5	85.1
5	5	6.8	6.8	91.9
6	2	2.7	2.7	94.6
7	1	1.4	1.4	95.9
8	1	1.4	1.4	97.3
9	1	1.4	1.4	98.6
11	1	1.4	1.4	100.0
Total	74	100.0	100.0	

**Framing**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	42	56.8	56.8	56.8
Positive	14	18.9	18.9	75.7
Critical	18	24.3	24.3	100.0
Total	74	100.0	100.0	



### Genre

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Comment/Background	3	4.1	4.1	4.1
Feature	3	4.1	4.1	8.1
Interview	11	14.9	14.9	23.0
Newsarticle	21	28.4	28.4	51.4
Reportage	36	48.6	48.6	100.0
Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### Topic

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Norwegian casualty	27	36.5	36.5	36.5
Combat	7	9.5	9.5	45.9
Effects of Norwegian mission	9	12.2	12.2	58.1
Equipment/personell	6	8.1	8.1	66.2
Everyday-life	1	1.4	1.4	67.6
Other	10	13.5	13.5	81.1
Security-situation	14	18.9	18.9	100.0
Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### Month

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	June 2010	23	31.1	31.1	31.1
	July 2010	29	39.2	39.2	70.3
	August 2010	3	4.1	4.1	74.3
	September 2010	1	1.4	1.4	75.7
	October 2010	6	8.1	8.1	83.8
	November 2010	1	1.4	1.4	85.1
	December 2010	3	4.1	4.1	89.2
	January 2011	1	1.4	1.4	90.5
	February 2011	1	1.4	1.4	91.9
	April 2011	2	2.7	2.7	94.6
	June 2011	4	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### Newspaper

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Aftenposten	19	25.7	25.7	25.7
	Alfa	6	8.1	8.1	33.8
	Dagbladet	13	17.6	17.6	51.4
	Nordlys	4	5.4	5.4	56.8
	NTB	10	13.5	13.5	70.3
	VG	22	29.7	29.7	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### Mentoring

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Main focus	4	5.4	5.4	5.4
	Mentioned	11	14.9	14.9	20.3
	No	59	79.7	79.7	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### International\_effort

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Main focus	3	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Mentioned	30	40.5	40.5	44.6
	No	41	55.4	55.4	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### Tasks\_Competence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Main focus	8	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Mentioned	50	67.6	67.6	78.4
	No	16	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

### Combat

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Main focus	12	16.2	16.2	16.2
	Mentioned	34	45.9	45.9	62.2
	No	28	37.8	37.8	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	